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Full Name of Author — Nom complet de l'auteur

Phyllis Elaine Coy

Date of Birth — Date de naissance

Dec. 5, 1930

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance

Jamaica, W.I.

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe

Box 1044, Athabasca, Alberta T0G 0B0

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse

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University — Université

University of Alberta

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1983

Name of Supervisor — Nom du directeur de thèse

Dr. John Oster

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WEST INDIAN NOVELS IN ENGLISH FOR HIGH SCHOOL USE

by

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A THESIS
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PERMANENT ADDRESS:

Box 1044
Athabasca, Alberta
T0G 0B0

Dated: Oct. 4, 1983

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled WEST INDIAN NOVELS IN ENGLISH FOR HIGH SCHOOL USE submitted by PHYLLIS ELAINE COY in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

John E. Oster
Supervisor

Dennis Searle

Date: Oct. 7, 1983

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was (1) to examine West Indian novels written in English to select those works which would be most appropriate for use in Canadian secondary schools, and (2) to provide teachers with a detailed analysis of selected novels in order to better prepare them to teach these novels. The study first demonstrates the need for a more varied literature program in schools, then develops the perspectives through which West Indian novels must be evaluated, surveys the bulk of West Indian novels, and from the survey analyses eight works considered most suitable for Canadian high school use.

Sociological and literary research supports the argument for the inclusion of English literature other than British and North American in the high school program. These contentions have been supplemented by the Alberta Language Arts curriculum objectives. The West Indian historical and cultural background, the traditional and more innovative concepts of criticism of novels, and the educational perspectives to be considered in evaluation of this new material for classroom use have been presented as providing the criteria for assessing the suitability of the works.

The study then provides a thematic overview of 110 West Indian novels in English from which, based on the perspectives of cultural authenticity, aesthetic worth and educational guidelines, the following eight were chosen as potentially enriching material for use in high schools: Vic Reid's New Day, John Hearne's Voices Under the Window, George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin, Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea, Samuel Selvon's A Brighter Sun and The Lonely Londoners,

Merle Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey, and Roger Mais' Brother Man.

The content and form of each novel have been briefly analyzed to assist teachers in selecting materials to suit their classes. The bibliography of primary and secondary works indicates further the wealth and importance of this literature today, while the analyses show that the literary and cultural insights afforded by the selected West Indian novels would greatly enhance literature studies in Canadian classrooms.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		Page
I.	TEACHING THE WEST INDIAN NOVEL IN HIGH SCHOOL: AN INTRODUCTION	1
	Need for the Study	1
	Purpose of the Study	6
	Delimitations	7
	Review of Previous Studies	9
	Methods and Procedures	10
	Limitations	10
	Significance of the Study	11
	Overview of the Study	12
II.	PERSPECTIVES IN ASSESSMENT OF WEST INDIAN NOVELS FOR SCHOOLS	14
	History and Cultural Environment	15
	Critical Framework for Assessment	22
	Educational Guidelines for Assessment	34
III.	TRENDS IN WEST INDIAN NOVELS: AN OVERVIEW	39
	History and Political Consciousness	40
	Portrayal of the West Indian Poor	50
	Psychological Legacy of Colonialism	59
	Class and Shade Consciousness in West Indian Novels	60
	Deculturalisation Revealed in West Indian Novels	73
	Novels of Youth in a West Indian Context	80
	Acute Alienation in West Indian Novels	82
	The Immigrant Experience in West Indian Novels	88

CHAPTER Page

Psychic Healing of the Rifted West Indian Personality 97

IV. ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NOVELS 106

Vic Reid: New Day 107

John Hearne: Voices Under the Window 113

George Lamming: In The Castle of My Skin 119

Jean Rhys: Wide Sargasso Sea 123

Samuel Selvon: A Brighter Sun 131

Merle Hodge: Crick Crack Monkey 135

Roger Mais: Brother Man 142

Samuel Selvon: The Lonely Londoners 147

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS 152

BIBLIOGRAPHY 160

APPENDIX A 172

Chapter I

TEACHING THE WEST INDIAN NOVEL IN HIGH SCHOOL: AN INTRODUCTION

Need for the Study

During the last sixty years educators have with increasing insistence stressed the need to strengthen literature studies in schools. Louise Rosenblatt (1968, 1976), Robert Heilman (1956), Dwight Burton (1960), and Nancy Arnez (1969) all emphasize the far-reaching effects of the study of literature on the shaping of personality, on growth of human understanding, and ultimately in fostering inter-group, inter-cultural communications. Burton points to the insights which literature gives into the complexity of character, the awareness of value clashes, and the commonness of human aspirations. He further notes that educators have long realized "literature which deals with social or group problems can aid in improving human relations and in developing a rational approach to social problems." (79) Rosenblatt (1968) insists on the social role that literature has to play

> . . . since the literary materials with which we deal are a potent means of forming the student's images of the world in which he lives, a potent means of giving sharpened insight into human nature and conduct. (9)

In her updated edition (1976) the thesis is the same as she declares "whatever the form . . . literature makes comprehensible the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite possibilities that life offers" (6) and consequently she insists that the teacher must

"recognize his responsibility toward the handling of psychological concepts." (13)

Along with this call for literature as a psychological and sociological facilitator of improved cultural awareness among people goes the argument for expanding the traditional areas of English studies. As Pat McBlane (1979) documents, the mid-twentieth century rise of independent nations from what used to be British colonies all over the globe, together with the growing sophistication of writers from those areas, has broken the traditional British-North American monopoly in the field of English literature.

Such critics and educators as McLeod (1961), Ramchand (1970), Larson (1971), Walsh (1973), King (1974), Hayman (1976), Baugh (1978), Hughes (1979) and Gilkes (1981) have all shown the significant contributions of writers in English from these Commonwealth regions to the mainstream of English literature. They have, in fact, indicated that any thorough study of modern English literature needs to be cognizant of this vibrant Commonwealth source.

At the high school level the plea to widen the scope of literature taught is especially strong among American educators. Lester Golub (1975) declares:

> With the rebirth of national ethnic consciousness, with the introduction of the values of a pluralistic and open society, there comes a need to introduce literature written in English which reflects the multi-cultural roots of our society, and which explains cultural experiences of non-Anglo groups who now express their culture and value system in the English language. (23)

And among such non-Anglo literatures he lists "Chicano and Caribbean Literature." (24) Toro Ladu (1968), Jesse Perry (1971), Daniel

Dieterich (1972), and Barbara Dodds Stanford (1972) all earnestly support this view. In a later appeal John Fisher (1979) urges expansion of the traditional literatures. He maintains that since the 1970 U.S. census indicates that European Americans are no longer the majority it is time to broaden literature studies to other cultures, and to America itself, while the thesis of Swift and Wahlstrom's Teaching into the Future (1980) adds another dimension to the argument by calling for a school of global education. Their proposal would require broader parameters for literature even if the country's population were completely homogeneous. Joseph Jones (1965) has long since made the case for our consideration of English "as a world language expressing itself in a world literature" with the natural corollary that we need to study "every bit of it that has a legitimate claim to attention." (20)

Though Fisher's warning of the patent alienation of American non-whites within the school system makes the cry for more diverse literature a critical one in the United States, we already have sufficient evidence of the alienation of the Natives in our schools and are beginning to hear of enough maladjustment of West Indian immigrant students in our urban centres to extend the warning to this country. Under these circumstances, Canadians who pride themselves on being part of a cultural mosaic would be short-sighted and contradictory to exclude from the English program works of high literary merit in these new literatures. The positive move in the new Alberta Program of Studies for Senior High Schools (1981) to mandate minimum Canadian content is a laudable one guaranteeing that students will be afforded ample opportunity to study themselves in the literature.

This should not blind us, however, to the fact that part of our cultural mosaic is an increasing minority of immigrants from newly independent Commonwealth nations whose literatures mirror for them their own cultures and identities and, at the same time, provide for the rest of Canadians an understanding of the background of their new countrymen. Killam (1973-4) puts the case aptly by saying

> I think it is true to say that the intrinsic worth and the development of a Canadian tradition can be focused and enriched by contrasting and comparing it with the longer literary tradition of England. I think it equally true to suggest that it can be elaborated and enriched by adding to our syllabuses examples of literatures in English from countries other than those we dwell on--from Africa, the Caribbean, India, Australia and New Zealand--literature with which we have more in common than might at first be supposed. (696-7)

In addition, the philosophy statement of the Alberta Senior High School Language Arts Curriculum Guide (1982) declares that "access to a wide variety of literary materials is essential to a balanced comprehensive literature program." (5) Among the specific objectives of that document we read that the program should encourage "the use of language to explore the environment and ideas of others, to develop new concepts, to evaluate what is discovered." (9) The Curriculum Guide also lists the exploration of human experience and values as a concept to be developed through literature, and the corresponding skills strand for English 10, 20, 30 includes "expand experience vicariously", "examine values expressed through literature", and "become aware of some of the variety, origins, conflicts, and trends in human values." (14) All of these, though they may be accomplished

through a narrow literature syllabus, can be more effectively absorbed by drawing on more varied literary sources.

The guidelines used by the Alberta Senior High Novels Ad Hoc Committee (quoted in Appendix A) are even more relevant. They include, among the criteria for the selection of full-length literature materials, the following:

4. Offer a variety of social, historical, geographical and cultural backgrounds.

5. Develop the student's understanding of today's world.

These criteria indicate a framework which would encourage the inclusion of literature from other cultures in our high school programs. In this vein McBlane (1979) recommends that "research be undertaken to identify other international literatures suitable for high school use." (138) She notes that in Alberta the African novels Things Fall Apart and Weep Not Child have been on the recommended lists of novels for senior high schools since 1975, but her questionnaire results showed "that only eight teachers ever offered the materials to students." (9) If her figures are reliable, then her inference is reasonable that lack of knowledge about the comparative literary merit of the novels and the possible relevance to the students could explain their lack of use.

The case with West Indian novels in Alberta High Schools is even worse. No West Indian title appears in the Secondary Language Arts Handbook's recommended novels list. The Senior High Language Arts Novels Ad Hoc Committee is considering several non-Anglo English novel titles. But, even if the Committee should decide to include West

Indian novels, the same lack of information about their comparative literary work and about the authors and cultural background might, as with the African novels included, leave them unused. This research, by identifying quality novels and analysing them, should provide teachers with information that could help them decide which novels might be most suitable for their students.

Purpose of the Study

So far the argument has been for the inclusion in the High School English curriculum of literatures in English from areas other than Britain and North America. Set within the context of the well-documented general rationale that it is desirable to include a range of literature in senior high language arts programs, this study aimed to furnish much-needed information on one area of modern non-Anglo English literature. The purpose has been to investigate the upsurge of novels in and about the West Indies to determine whether there are some which would be suitable material for the Canadian senior high school English curriculum. The study has therefore (1) given an account of the cultural and literary roots which form the background for West Indian writers, (2) presented an overview of the West Indian novels in English, and (3) provided a more thorough analysis of those novels which seem to best fulfill the Alberta Program of Studies objectives (quoted above), to meet the Department of Education criteria for the selection of novels for High Schools (copy in Appendix A), and to offer rich cultural and aesthetic rewards for the reader.

Delimitations

The research was concerned with the study of West Indian novels in English starting with those published in the 1930's (generally considered the beginning of the West Indian literary renaissance) and including those published in 1981. This restriction to novels, though there is a fair body of West Indian poetry, short stories and plays, was a deliberate one. There were several reasons for thus limiting the research apart from the obvious one of finding a sufficiently manageable study. In the first place, although no one novel can completely capture all aspects of a culture, the extended prose fiction has space for the portrayal on a wide canvas of the novelist's vision of the background, people, issues, themes of his life-world. The novel is therefore an excellent means of transporting the student imaginatively into that world with which he can compare his own and, one hopes, arrive at an appreciation of the diversity and the commonality of peoples. Secondly, since it is generally recognized among critics and historians of the area that the West Indian novel (like the Canadian novel which has its mandated place of importance in Alberta schools) is a recent development, flourishing as a conscious form only in the last forty years, the genre is more convenient for analysis. Besides, the West Indian novel, despite its recent appearance, has a sizeable body of critical reviews to help direct their study.

For the purpose of this study Ramchand's interpretation of what is West Indian (1970) has been adopted. West Indian novels are those extended prose fictions written by people who were born or grew up mainly in the West Indies--the formerly British colonies of the

Caribbean and South America. These novels usually have a West Indian setting and "fictional characters and situations whose social correlates are immediately recognizable as West Indian." (3) The novels are by West Indians about the West Indian reality; that is, they are concerned with some attempts to portray the way of life, the aspirations and frustrations of these post-colonial lands. This definition allowed for the inclusion of works by West Indians writing abroad if the material concerned itself with the West Indian reality, even when the setting was some other part of the world. It avoided the ethnic distinction or the question of whether the writers were West Indian by birth or upbringing. It eliminated, however, writers who simply used the Caribbean setting as exotic background.

Novels have been defined as extended prose fiction of at least 100 pages. Therefore novellas, travelogues, histories or biographies--except indirectly where they help with the understanding of the background or the explication of writers' attitudes--have been excluded from the study.

The choice of studying West Indian novels was determined in part by my own background. A West Indian myself, I was keenly interested in surveying the wealth of fiction that has been produced there in the last forty years. My training in English literature, brought up-to-date by readings in modern literary critical theory, established the frame of reference for the analyses while my experience in the Alberta high school English classroom and with current curriculum thought helped to guide my selections.

Review of Previous Studies

Much of the direction of the study was inspired by Patricia May McBlane's M.Ed. thesis, African Novels for High School Use, (1979) which gives a rationale for the inclusion of non-Anglo English literature in school curricula, provides an overview of African novels written in English, identifies those that have possibilities for use in our schools, and gives information to teachers by way of analyses of the selected novels. As McBlane noted, "few studies have been conducted to investigate the contribution which non-Western literary artists could make to enlarge the student's perception of literature, language and life." (7) She mentions Bostick's study (1971) of the effects of teaching the cultural background to students of Saddle River Country Day School, New Jersey, on their understanding of African literature (9). McBlane reported as well the apparently successful 1970 Ontario Council of Teachers of English seminar on "African literature in Ontario Schools" and the 1975 St. Mary's University seminar on Non-Western humanities in America (9). Few other studies have been located. Ranjani Ash (1977) demonstrated how South Asian literature enriched the English curriculum by providing a key to the people of South Asia and their cultures, religions, languages and history. Roy Cogdell and Cliff Eagleton (1979) presented their humanistic model for educating students about the black experience while Linda Adamson (1980) showed the advantages of incorporating such materials into the two-year college English program, and Geta LeSeur (1980) reported the favorable effects of a fully developed eight-week unit on twentieth century French African literature for juniors and seniors.

Methods and Procedures

In collecting the primary works to be surveyed, I have used Stella Merriman's Commonwealth Caribbean Writers: A Bibliography (1970), the University of Alberta Library's Bibliography of West Indian Literature (1975), and Anthony Boxhill's "A Bibliography of West Indian Fiction 1900-1970", World Literature Written in English, April 1971. Titles of later works were obtained from reviews in Commonwealth publications edited by Walsh (1973), from King's Literatures of the World (1974), and his New English Literatures (1980). This material was further up-dated with items obtained at the University of West Indies Library. Especially valuable were several out-of-print works, copies of BIM, KYK-Over Al and Jamaica Journal articles and theses on related subjects done at the University of the West Indies.

The bibliography of primary sources gives the list of the novels which have been read for the study. Every effort was made to avoid any arbitrary system of limiting the research lest good quality material suitable for high school use should be excluded that way.

Limitations

Not every West Indian novel ever written has been read for this study. The 110 novels read start with those written by Mendez in the 1930's and end with Hearne's The Sure Salvation (1981) except for DeLisser's Jane's Career which, though a 1914 publication, was available in the 1972 Caribbean Writers' Series edition. References to works published prior to 1930 have been through secondary sources.

The study is only concerned with West Indian novels written in English although there is a significant body of West Indian fiction in French and Spanish.

No pilot study or testing of materials was done for the research. The recommendations have been on the basis of the rationale set up, in accordance with the Alberta guidelines for the selection of novels, and through the application of subjective and objective criteria for judging the work's literary value and suitability. The danger of subjectivity must be acknowledged but efforts to minimize such subjectivity have been made through recourse to the growing body of criticism on West Indian novels.

Significance of the Study

An overall value of the study is that it provides quite a thorough compilation of primary and secondary sources of materials related to West Indian novels. The overview of the novels written since the 1930's has literary merit for although there have been periodic reviews of West Indian novels in the press and in scholarly journals, there has been no other complete overview to date.

From an educational standpoint, the descriptions of the novels, the more detailed treatment of the ones chosen, and the bibliography which includes the novels and current materials on them, should help teachers, students and those other researchers who wish to obtain further information about novels and novelists in the area. If the research at least makes teachers or students aware of the vital contribution of West Indian novelists and introduces them to West Indian culture, issues, and aspirations, it would do much to break

down the walls of provincialism that threaten to block our world view.

Overview of the Study

The present chapter has revealed the need for the study of West Indian novels in Canadian high schools. It has outlined the purpose, set the parameters, noted the limitations, and indicated the significance of the work.

Chapter II of this thesis presents a historical and cultural background of West Indian fiction in order to explain some of the style and the pervading themes of the writing. It also explains the criteria used to judge the works and guide the selection for high school use.

Chapter III provides an overview of the West Indian novels and identifies significant thematic and stylistic trends. This chapter introduces each novelist and attempts to relate his work to the stream of West Indian fiction and to the English novel tradition as a whole. It also gives a capsulization of each novel and makes comments on features that may be of particular interest in relation to themes and trends identified.

Chapter IV provides brief analyses of eight novels selected for classroom use. Based on the literary quality of the novels surveyed in the overview, the authenticity of their presentation of society, their fulfillment of the criteria of selection set by the Senior High Language Arts Ad Hoc Committee (novels section), and their estimated relevance to Canadian schools, the novels New Day, In the Castle of My Skin, Wide Sargasso Sea, Voices Under the Window, A Brighter Sun, Crick Crack Monkey, Brother Man and The Lonely Londoners received

further analysis. These decisions were aided by the growing number of critical appraisals of West Indian writing including essays in such journals as BIM, New World Quarterly, Caribbean Studies, KYK-Over Al, Times Literary Supplement, Public Opinion, Jamaica Journal, Black Orpheus, Focus, and critiques by Baugh, King, Ramchand, Braithwaite, Walsh, Hamner, James, Coultard and Ngugi.

In the final chapter based on the research, a number of conclusions about the study of West Indian novels in Canadian schools have been drawn, and a number of recommendations have been made for the implementations of these conclusions.

Chapter II

PERSPECTIVES IN ASSESSMENT OF WEST INDIAN NOVELS FOR SCHOOLS

Lamming (1960), Ladu (1968), Ekwensi (1964), Achebe (1975), all assert that the literature of a people mirrors or reflects that people's culture. McBlane (1979) describes literature as "the collective written expression of a group, a race, a people," as "the aggregate representation of the culture that nutures it." (15) The West Indian novelist is no less committed to this reflection of his world. Wickham (1970), in an article dealing with the development of West Indian consciousness in West Indian fiction, declares

> I believe that the novelist or short story writer is a more accurate reflector of his society than any other kind of writer. I believe that fiction is more likely to lead a reader to the essential truth about a people than any record of purely historical or sociological fact. (73)

Any responsible assessment of fiction from an unfamiliar culture must therefore be preceded by an understanding of the background of the history and customs of the people represented. As McBlane concludes, "appreciation of a piece of fiction is enhanced by an understanding of the background from which it comes." (15) Such understanding is necessary not only for the critic who, among his tasks, must decide whether the work authentically reflects the society portrayed, but also for the teacher who must assist his students in this exploration of foreign culture. Darwin Turner in his lecture entitled "The Promise of English" (NCTE, 1970) emphasizes the value of such background information for teachers when he affirms

> the conscientious teacher must not only have a thorough knowledge of the literature to be taught, not only understand the literary environment from which it emerged, but must also learn the significant facts about the history and culture of the writers and should make an effort to understand their national or racial experience in order to comprehend the significance of their writings. (144)

Command of the West Indian past, especially as it affects the literature written of and in that area, is therefore the first perspective necessary to judge the fiction and make selections from it for use in our schools.

History and Cultural Environment

The English speaking islands of the Caribbean form part of the archipelago stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the northern coast of South America. These islands, together with Belize in Central America and Guyana in South America were, prior to their recent independence, the British West Indies. The islands include the numerous Bahama islands to the north, Jamaica in the Greater Antilles, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago in the South Eastern Caribbean, and the Windward Islands of Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, and Antigua. All the islands and the two mainland states share a common history of slavery and domination by European colonizers. Rhonda Cobham in her essay "The Background" (West Indian Literature, 1979) explains that the early history was "dominated by that 'pacification' and extermination of the native population, and the fierce rivalry between successive European powers." (9) She also notes that not until after the Napoleonic wars "When the Caribbean Sea was no longer of strategic importance to Europe did these territories

stop changing hands and begin to estabish some degree of stability." (9)

Up until the twentieth century, the types of activities which characterised life in what is now the English speaking Caribbean and what used to be the British West Indies did not lend itself to high quality creative writing and certainly not to any indigenous, imaginative creative fiction. Within the first 100 years of the discovery of these lands, the Arawak aborigines had all perished through the unaccustomed labour of slavery under the Spaniards. The more belligerent Caribs withdrew into tiny island pockets or into the interior of the Demerara on the South American mainland. To replace these natives on the lucrative sugar plantations, the Spaniards imported numerous African slaves. The eighteenth century take-over of these Spanish, and in some instances French, colonies may have changed masters for the slaves but it did nothing to create the atmosphere of permanence or such settled life as could inspire creative writing among the slave owners.

The conditions for writing were more hopeless for the slaves. Without the opportunity to read and write, the slave populations had developed an oral tradition with numerous stories, riddles, work songs, and ring-games and had maintained some vestiges of African religious rituals, generously mixed with the trappings of Christianity. But a written literature was non-existent.

The nineteenth century in these islands, in Guyana and Belize, saw an increase in the number of educated mulattos, many of whom joined the creole intelligentia, but any writing produced by this class was so English derivative that there was little chance for

originality. Emancipation (1834) gave technical freedom to Her Majesty's slave subjects but the destitution which followed for most and, worse still, the heavy legacy of inferiority left by slavery made the common man too ashamed of anything local--language or custom--to write realistically of the West Indian experience. In the latter half of the nineteenth century there came streams of Indian indentured labourers. Chinese and Syrians, and in some areas Portuguese, came later in search of the good life. All these ethnic groups added to the exotic and complicated racial mix and accentuated racial tensions, but it was only in the second quarter of the twentieth century that their vocal expression in fiction became evident.

The education system in the West Indies was another powerful factor hampering the development of a real West Indian literature. A purely British curriculum complete with overseas Cambridge and London examinations provided the European expatriates and creoles with the culture of the mother country, but forced the rest of the population lucky enough to acquire that education to learn the minutest details of British history and literature, the only references to the students' own heritage being indirect and from the sole perspective of historians of the Empire.

The inhibiting effects of such education can hardly be over-emphasized. For the aspiring middle class, use of the native dialect, except in the market or in conversation with domestics or labourers, was strictly prohibited. High school students, who characterized all the multitudes of colourful West Indian flowers as "roses", were forced to study several English romantic poems full of images of daffodils, delpheniums, eglantines, lilacs, and shy violets. They

read of the skylark, the nightingale, the moors and heaths, recited their memory passages affectedly and patterned their narrative efforts on the English classics they read as set texts, or on the boys' and girls' boarding school fantasies they devoured in the library.

By the 1930's, the elementary schools provided some information about the history and geography of the particular West Indian island that was home, yet even this basic information failed to reach the more prosperous students who went the prep school/high school route. The graduate of a West Indian high school literature course could boast an in-depth knowledge of at least one of Chaucer's tales, a number of Shakespeare's plays, a section of Milton's Paradise Lost, Comus, and Lycidas and other Miltonic lyrics, the English poets of the Romantic period and several nineteenth century English novels, but he had no local writers to emulate. As recently as the 1960's in technical high schools in Jamaica, graduating students had to write the English Associated Board examinations which presented such general essay topics as "The Comparative Advantages of Gas Fires and Electric Fires" and "The Future of Wildlife in your Area"--topics that would be completely irrelevant to children whose homes would never be heated and whose only contact with wildlife would be with lizards, birds, frogs, cockroaches and the multitudes of insect pests.

The work-world afforded no greater expansion of the West Indian self-image and so further inhibited the serious observation and analysis that identify quality fiction. The situation in Jamaica, where I grew up, serves to explain what Rhonda Cobham writing of "The Background" in West Indian Literature (1979), called "deformed human relationships" in the West Indies. Although the island's motto is

"Out of Many One People" and there are many ethnic strains in the Jamaican mosaic, until the mid-twentieth century, colour or rather skin shades largely determined social and economic status. No dark-skinned employees were visible in the commercial banks, among executives of hotels or large private enterprises. Even some high schools seemed reserved for white or near-white students. While among the middle-class and poor masses, there was the slave-inherited inferiority complex, a kind of hatred of their own black origins.

Bruce King (1979) points out in his introductory essay (West Indian Literature, 1) that although West Indian creative writing has existed from the eighteenth century, it was not until this century that writers of real ability began to appear. In the first quarter of the present century H.G. DeLisser wrote many books but only two, Jane's Career, 1914 and Susan Proudleigh, 1915, could be considered as serious early efforts to fictionalize and interpret the lives of the people of these lands and even here the stories were vitiated by an unrealistically happy ending. Jane, the servant girl protagonist of Jane's Career, was a dynamic character who evolved from a terrified country girl clumsily trying to satisfy the outrageous demands of her insensitive mistress to the rather self-assured though vain young woman who has herself climbed into the maid-employing class through marriage to a printer. Jane's hardships as she fends off the advances of her mistress' "mampala" nephew are reminiscent of eighteenth century English heroines like Pamela or such nineteenth century figures as Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, or George Eliot's Eppie. Susan Proudleigh is also a lower class figure but the emphasis in this novel is on the influence of the returned emigrant.

Unfortunately however, DeLisser's novels which followed Jane's Career and Susan Proudleigh (Triumphant Squaliton 1917, Revenge: A Tale of Old Jamaica 1919, White Witch of Rosehall 1929, Morgan's Daughter 1953, and Arawak Girl 1968), were as Bruce King records (West Indian Literature, 2) "exotic historical novels about pirates, witchcraft and romantic love."

Given the European orientation of the creoles and mulattos, the pure survival existence of the black masses and the children of indentured labourers, and the established education system, the lack of originality of West Indian literature prior to the 1930's was not surprising. Barrie Davies in his thesis "The Achievement of the West Indian Novel" (1966) states:

> The West Indies knew only the culture of the Mother Country, and what was being written, though the ostensible subject was often the West Indies, might have been done by an Englishman responding not to new experiences made urgent by an inward pressure, but to the literature of the Mother Country. What characterises the prose and the poetry is a lack of immediacy and an unreality; it is de mode because the writers are looking at their life through books, and making their work out of a response to other men's experiences. (19-20)

What then brought about the change to the vitality in fiction during and after the 1930's? Again a combination of causes which the cultural, educational and economic repressions could not confine.

The whole Negro world was being deeply stirred by Marcus Garvey's Pan African movement in the United States. As Cobham (1979) reports, in the 1930's the oppressed masses in the West Indies found leaders and began demanding living wages, improved working conditions and the right to arbitrate through unions, and the social stigma

attached to the indigenous culture began to be challenged. The political and literary journals, The Beacon in Trinidad, KYK-Over-Al in Guyana, Focus in Jamaica, and BIM in Barbados were in place to provide writers with some chance of a reading public. Whatever combination of causes operated in particular instances, West Indian writers began seriously exploring West Indian subjects and themes, and started (in much the same way as did Canadian writers of the same period) the persistent search for their identity. In turn the rebellion against entrenched inferiority gathered momentum. The Rastafarian back-to-Africa movement, which at first was looked upon as a contemptuous lunatic fringe, was soon adopted by many as an expression of protest against the "babylon" system. Barrie Davies, himself a member of the privileged class, could claim in "The Achievement of the West Indian Novel" (1966)

> The attitude of the Rastafarian in Jamaica where his emphasis is upon the return to Africa is really an insistence upon a dignity, a naturalness, a right to be different, yet human, and is not necessarily an escapist one; certainly it is more realistic than that of the middle-classes who because of their insecurity continue to import their civilization, are extending and deepening the colonial mentality. (11)

Winds of change blew also through the education programs. Efforts were being made to collect the stories which had been handed down among the people. Researchers, foremost among whom were Ivy Baxter and Olive Lewin, scoured the countryside recording folk songs and dances. Serious studies were being made of the dialects which began to be spoken with pride rather than shame. By the independence dates of the sixties, national pride had soared. The countries are

still deeply in debt. Their economies are tottering. Politics, economic pressures, and the rise of violence among the masses have driven the professionals and mercantile groups into exile. But the black population is certainly no longer abject. In fact, the danger of discrimination in reverse is now the dominant fear.

The spate of high quality fiction produced since the 1930's awakening is the subject of the next chapter which attempts to give a thematic overview of the novels.

Critical Framework for Assessment

Grasping the historical and cultural background which gives rise to a body of literature will further the appreciation of that literature. Such knowledge should also help the teacher-critic to judge to what extent the literature reveals the people, conflicts, hopes and fears of the group represented. As it deals dramatically and imaginatively with human conflict, it has strong psychological implications and the potential for showing to the reader qualities within himself and his fellow human beings. As the novel deals with interrelationships and presents pictures of locales, it can serve as handmaiden for sociological investigations. To assess the literary merits in such cases, we would question the artist's ability to identify with or portray a wide range of experience and his "capacity to articulate through his fantasy the existential problems of his contemporaries." (Coser, 1963, 3)

However, there are other important factors determining the appraisal of literary works and guiding critical judgments on them. T.S. Eliot (1953) affirms:

> The greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards though we must remember that whether it is literature, or not, can be determined only by literary standards. (31)

The second perspective to be considered in the analysis and selection of West Indian novels for schools must therefore be an aesthetic view. Here again some background for the arguments and principles behind the critical framework seems appropriate.

David Daiches (1936) declares that the function of criticism is "to interpret a work of literature to the reader, to help him to understand and appreciate it by examining its nature and exhibiting its merits." (7) The problem, he says, is that merits imply pre-existing standards, so that the critic cannot just exhibit the merits of the work but he must also explain why they are merits; i.e. reveal his standards and justify them. The novel, however, springing as it does from such disparate seventeenth century prose forms as the "character" sketch, the adventure tale, the philosophic essay, and the dramatic dialogue, and becoming by the twentieth century a genre for which the eminent novelist and critic, E.M. Forster (1954), could find no more specific definition than "a fiction in prose of a certain extent" (6), poses severe problems for the literary critic. Should he in face of the numerous variants of the extended prose fiction evolving from Defoe's cautionary tale, Richardson's epistolary portrayals, Fielding's episodic renditions, admit the impossibility of drawing up guidelines and setting up standards for assessment? This was the trend of novel critiques through the first quarter of this century. Or should he endeavor to extract from the many and varied manifestations of the genre a list of the <u>sine qua non</u> elements by

which to judge its worth? Is our response in the final analysis a gut-level one which we cannot articulate? Or can we check off the ways in which the work does or does not meet the criteria of a "good" novel?

The critics themselves have been divided on this issue. There are those who hold with a kind of mystical view of the act of literary creation. They see the product as something which can be enjoyed and appreciated but never adequately analysed. Their writing about fiction tends to be inspirational, infusing us with a feeling of the mystery and worth of the author's creation but without any specific categories of assessment of the work. Joseph Conrad, for instance, writes passionately of the artist who, like the scientist, must make "a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect," (Preface to Nigger of the Narcissus, (1916, VII) but who to discover the truth "descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he is deserving and fortunate, . . . finds the terms of his appeal . . ." He further declares that such appeal is

> less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring, and sooner forgotten. Yet the effects endure forever. . . . It speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives: to our sense of pity and beauty, and pain: to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation. (VIII)

How does one set up categories to assess such profundities? D.H. Lawrence's Selected Literary Criticism (1955) is also of this transcendental nature. He contends that the novel "considers the whole of

man alive whereas saint, scientist, philosopher and poet are all masters of different bits of man alive, but never the whole hog." (105) This is indeed a powerful claim for the novel which he describes as the perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships "helping us to live as nothing else can, no didactic scripture anyhow." (113) But Lawrence gives the would-be critic no more specific guidelines for judgment than the inevitable subjectivity of his response. He generalizes:

> Criticism can never be a science; it is in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores . . . . We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all the pseudo-scientific classifying and analysing in an imitation of botanical fashion is mere impertinence and mostly jargon. (118)

Henry James (1956), himself a painstaking craftsman, points out the ambiguity of the term "good" when applied to the novel. For some readers a good novel could mean one depicting virtuous characters; for another it could mean a "happy ending"; for yet another the term could connote suspenseful action unimpeded by any tiresome analysis or "description". (8) Yet James expresses firm belief that the aesthetically good novel will stand the test of time. He declares:

> There is as much difference as there ever was between a good novel and a bad one: the bad is swept with all the daubed canvasses and spoiled marble into some unvisited limbo, or infinite rubbish yard beneath the back windows of the world, and the good subsists and emits its light and stimulates our desires for perfection. (9)

This is a fine expression of faith that great work will survive but it gives the critic little to help him sort through the plethora of

twentieth century fiction or to point out to his contemporaries wherein this novel has succeeded and that one failed. Fortunately, Henry James does not leave the matter with only these generalizations. Though he warns against the danger of setting a priori principles for the novel, he holds that its very raison d'etre lies in its attempt to represent life. (5) While he states that "the only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting," (9) he has many suggestions to offer to create that interest and render the basic impression of life. His thesis seems to be that the novel must be critiqued as a whole. He objects to any attempt to discuss the story apart from the novel. For, says he,

> The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread. (Future of the Novel, 1956, 21)

Neither does he see any point in distinguishing between the novel of incident and the novel of character because for him they are inextricably bound. (11) In the same way, narrative, description and dialogue are intermingled. He sees no need to separate the novel from the romance, and he particularly abhors the super-fine sensibilities of his age that sought to debar from the novel any presentation of the disagreeable or ugly. On this matter it is his contention that the province of art "is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision." (20) He argues against those critics who insist that the novel must have adventure and he sees no significance in Besant's description of the novel's "conscious moral purpose" since the essence

of moral energy is to survey the whole field, not plug into one particular philosophy or viewpoint. In fact, the quality of sincerity and an air of reality appear to be the only criteria James would demand of the novel. These are not, however, trivial goals. They are rigorous, comprehensive requirements summoning in his view all the dedication of the artist for the air of reality is no simple verisimilitude. "Catching the very note and trick, the strange irregular rhythm of life, that is the attempt whose strenuous force keeps fiction upon her feet." (19) It is not that James failed to see the need for discriminating taste. He decried the wild proliferation of books and the massive, endlessly increasing reading public made up largely of women and youngsters. (35) But for practical criticism he has given little beyond the requirement of an impression of life, an air of reality, sincerity, and the hope that the great relation between men and women would be treated more frankly to avoid artificiality. One wonders how James would view the extremes of frankness to which our current fiction has gone in the portrayal of man-woman relationships, and how his generalizations would cope with the much more bewildering spate of mediocre novels available today than the plethora he spoke of in 1956. His Art of the Novel (1934 and 1950) is more specific, especially where it outlines his use of the central intelligence in his novels providing thereby, as Richard Blackmuir in the introduction indicates, "a compositional centre for his art such as life never saw." (VIII)

If Conrad, Lawrence and James could give the critic no more than a feel for the domain and scope of the novel, where can we find more specific guidelines for assessment? Like David Diaches in New

Literary Values (1936) we must reject Matthew Arnold's "touchstone theory" as it assigns a static quality to all of civilization when it takes examples of great literature produced during a certain period and applies them as criteria of excellence to literature of another period. (125) We must reject as well the a priori, recipe approach denounced by James. Where then can we turn for workable precedents?

Paradoxically enough, it is the very novelist and critic who has given us the widest definition of the novel who has also suggested headings under which the literary critic can appraise aspects of the novel. E.M. Forster (1954) has also provided much of the terminology which persists in the analysis of prose fiction. For him this "fiction in prose of a certain extent" displays a sufficient number of commonalities to enable the critic to reflect on those elements which contribute to the work's appeal. Accordingly he considers (a) the story--narrative events in sequence, (b) the people or characters, (c) the plot--the more sophisticated treatment of events involving motivation, (d) fantasy--presentation of the supernatural, of mythology, and including parodies and adaptations, (e) prophecy--signifying the author's tone or attitude to his subject matter and his theme or universal implication, and (f) pattern and rhythm--terms used to denote the whole aesthetic shape of the work. If one accepts these as "aspects" or ways of looking at the novel instead of invoking some dogmatic prescriptions for constructing a novel, then he would have at least some reasonable points of departure in a critical discussion which does not preclude the appeal to individual taste or detract from the creative genius of the writer. A quick glance at the categories reveals the fact that they are subtitles under the more general

headings of content and form, and though one can appreciate Henry James's fear that the critic may divorce story or plot from the very fabric of the novel or go theme hunting like Little Jack Horner looking for plums, some convenient categories are necessary to show the process towards the overall impact which the novel might have. Far from leading the reader astray--away from the enjoyment of the novel as a whole--such analysis should lead him back to the work ready for a deeper appreciation of its worth. By the same token, if the analysis has shown the novel to be contrived, meretricious, it might be worthwhile for the reader to determine why he has had such a different response.

And so in all humility the critic rushes in, knowing that to consider any one aspect of the novel at the exclusion of the others or of the work as a whole is to falsify its effect, yet knowing also that not to hold up such aspects for view is to fall into more or less picturesque generalizations that may be inspirational but of little help through the jungle growth of twentieth century fiction. As he considers the content or the "what" of the novel--the plot, characters, setting and theme, the issues dealt with, the message conveyed--he presents the elements that would first attract the reader. The plot or storyline of the novel has undergone some radical changes since the eighteenth century beginnings. Strict chronological development of action, especially external action, has given place to more subtle psychological exploration which touches the tapeworm of time only intermittently. A critic who would fault the modern stream-of-consciouness novel for distorting time would have failed in his task by not relating the work to its purpose. But as the novel

description in the novel would be to localize the characters and to render the social setting." (331) He characterises good novel description as follows:

> Everywhere the primary requirement is that of relevance, refusal to rig the description. When these essentials have been observed, the descriptive passages take their place in the texture of the novel and cannot be detached and enjoyed for their own sake, nor wished away from the novel without damaging the fabric. ("Endangering the Reader's Neck", in Theory of the Novel, 331)

This is also the view expressed by Elizabeth Bowen (1950) who states "Scene is only justified in the novel where it can be shown, or at least felt, to act upon action or character. In fact where it has dramatic use." (254)

The last of Forster's aspects of content is prophecy, the theme which is often an implication rather than any obvious statement made about life and people. This aspect sometimes comes through the intermingled elements of the novel as what Forster calls the writer's tone of voice, the prophecy, concerning the universe and universals. (86). Much of the question of significance rests on this quality whose analysis demands careful study of the text. Critics are generally agreed that the touchstone of greatness lies in the universal overtones of the work, appealing to different eras, different cultures, different age groups, and different sectors of society. Yet there is some confusion in the way some critics interpret this universality. Chinua Achebe in his Morning Yet on Creation Day (1975), exposes those "Colonialist critics" who can only see merit in writing devoid of specific local context. Were they to follow through on this vague concept of the universal, then writers like Faulkner, Steinbeck,

still claims to reflect life, he must ask how realistic is the situation, how inevitable the outcome once we grant the complicating incidents feeding into it. Though we value suspense and mystery, we do not like to feel that sensational effects have been achieved by unfair contrivance and coincidental manipulation.

In this expectation that the novel will mirror life, we also ask whether the characters ring true. They may not be beings with whom we would wish to identify. The main ones, drawn from the world of men and not from the realm of gods, are more likely to be mixed beings and not the saints, heroes and demons of legendary times. We expect to get to know some of these characters better than we know our neighbours of the real world because the artist has conceived his creations in their entirety. When these persons change in the course of the action, we ask that the possibility for the change be within their personalities as they have come through to us. We would like any dynamic or changing character to be "surprising in a convincing way" (Forster, 78). When the characters speak, we ask that their language be appropriate to their background and personalities. Of course, no novel manages without lesser characters, the background folk sometimes coming vividly to life, those that serve the action rather than have lives of their own. There may be some flat, some static, some caricatures; even some stereotypes may have a place. But the overall effect of their interaction should create an illusion of reality.

There was a time when setting and background description often formed separate purple patches in the novel. This is not characteristic of the later more self-conscious novel. More common is the attitude expressed by D.S. Bland (1967): "The only justifiable use of

Hardy, whose characters and situations are bound to the local soil, must also fail the test. Universal overtones should certainly not suggest that the greatest writers go searching for some bloodless, general protagonist in some larger-than-life setting, engaged in some elemental struggle through which he makes generalizations about life and people. Such character, situation, conflict may be effective as parts of a homily, an allegory or a didactic exemplum, but it is unlikely to succeed as the graphic representation of life we have come to expect of the novel. We expect the novel to plunge us imaginatively into the local, individual characters and their struggles, and to sense the universals, the generalizations, as projections from the intensely realized particulars. It is no wonder that, as Ronald Hayman (1976) says "A great novelist is likely to be at his best in writing about the society he was born in." (34) Chinua Achebe (1975) declares:

> every literature must seek the things that belong unto its peace, must, in other words, speak of a particular place, evolve out of the necessities of its history, past and current, and the aspirations and destiny of its people. (11)

It is possible, of course, to clutter the portrayal with excessive detail as some of the "slice of life" novelists have done, but it is more often the case that vitally, vividly dramatized local scenes, characters, struggles, will give off those meaningful glints of universal application that distinguish great art.

More elusive than content considerations are the criteria we use to assess the novel's form. Again with the realization that inspecting any of these elements in isolation is merely a convenience for

discussion purposes, we look at the novelist's technique; the appropriateness of language to character and situation, the narrative devices used including the choice of point of view and its effect on the overall tone of the writing, the whole shape and structure of the work--what E.M. Forster refers to as "Pattern and Rhythm". (152)

Twentieth century novelists and critics have paid increasing attention to experimentation with technique through which to objectify ideas and materials. Novels that last do more than recount "one darned thing after another" and so critics, among them William Van O'Conner, Mark Shorer, Allen Tate, Joseph Warren Beach, David Daiches, William Troy (Forms of Modern Fiction, 1959), attempt to demonstrate the ways by which the novelist brings the reader into his reality. These are the characteristics which will identify a work as unique even if ten writers have used the same subject matter and suggest similar themes. Language considerations, for intance, would indicate how the involuted style of a Jamesian character so fitting for his superfine sensibilities would be most inappropriate for a Hemingway narrative with its "nada" theme and tough characters. Mark Shorer (1959) defines technique as:

> the uses to which language, as language, is put to express the quality of the experience in question; and the uses of point of view not only as a mode of dramatic delimitation, but more particularly, of thematic definition. Technique is really what T.S. Eliot means by 'convention'; any selection, structure or distortion, any form or rhythm imposed upon the world of action; by means of which . . . our apprehension of the world is enriched or renewed. (11)

This is where we consider to what extent the novelist renders or dramatizes the situations instead of his telling about them and trying

to make us imagine them. We might also look at the novelist's skill in selection, at the way he chooses to interweave scenes, summaries and descriptions to keep alive the excitement while he furnishes needed information. In her essay "Narrative Technique" (Theory of the Novel 1967), Phyllis Bentley speaks of the endless devices employed by modern novelists to make summary and description appear as scene and thus minimize tedium, casting summary for instance in the guise of a character's reflections upon another or as dialogue between characters and so on. In the novelist's portrayals we have come to expect a minimum of author interference or editorialization. We want to be moved, yes, but we are more satisfied when our responses come as by-products of the portrayals.

As the foregoing discussion indicates, although the critic admittedly makes a first judgment of the novel under review subjectively, he can nevertheless be able to show by considering the various aspects of the content and form, what factors fed into his assessment.

Educational Guidelines for Assessment

While the critic must be cognizant of this literary tradition in his assessment, while he must bear in mind any new dimensions in the development of the novel, and while he must employ his understanding of the milieu of the novels in order to judge the authenticity of their imaginative respresentation of aspects of that milieu, he must also consider specific educational perspectives if he is to select materials for class-room use. Fundamental questions about the purpose of literature study in schools lie behind these perspectives, and they

must be posed and at least implicitly answered if the task of selection is not to be a futile one.

Among the pleasures provided by literature, J.N. Hook (1972) lists the vicarious involvement and the escape from the humdrum which the reader derives from imaginative accounts of far away or unusual experiences. He includes as well the pleasure of conscious recognition of artistry and the fun of unravelling a plot or a mystery. Beyond these pleasure, Hook indicates that literature furnishes the reader with information not found in encyclopedias, information which is really insight into our own personalities and those of our fellow human beings. (128-129) Later Hook notes that fiction provides partial answers to questions of identity, to such metaphysical queries as whether "people are merely accidental excrescences on a planet that is but an atom in the universe." (166)

The novel should possess these values and more. In his discussion on novels of social problems (among which West Indian novels must be included) Dwight Burton (1970) notes:

> Teachers have realized for a long time, apparently, that literature which deals with social or group problems can aid in improving human relations and in developing a rational approach to social problems, an approach based on the awareness of alternatives in our group life. First, literature can help to relieve group tensions by stressing the universals, the basic similarities in life as it is lived at many different levels and under many different conditions in our American society and in our world. Although we have in our society a number of economic levels, people in these varying groups are faced with the same basic need for finding some measure of success and happiness. (275)

The novel chosen for classroom use, whether funny or tragic, should have the potential for provoking such speculations in the minds

of the students. When the novels address specifically social issues we look to them as facilitators in developing human understanding but we still demand that they meet the criteria of works of art. To help the critic or teacher discriminate between socially significant selections that are art and those that are blatant propoganda, Burton suggests two questions. "Does the selection place the main stress on the timeless rather than the timely?" and "Is the reader given alternatives in emotion or are his feelings rigidly channeled?" (278) This does not mean that the writer has to be impartial for socially significant fiction is rarely objective and often impassioned. As Burton states the essential difference can be defined in terms of characterization:

> Does the author make us feel with the characters or only about them? When we feel with characters we become concerned with the "why" rather than the "what" of human acts; we are concerned with the basis of motivation. Thus we are offered alternatives of feeling. (178)

No doubt, arguments such as these guide educators and curriculum planners who set goals and objectives of literature programs. The Alberta Language Arts Program of Studies (1982) seems to be keyed to these notions. Skill seven of its Statement of Content states that the student through his literature study should be able to develop his understanding of himself and others and broaden his knowledge of his cultural heritage. Concept nine of the same document declares that human experience and values can be explored through literature, while the corresponding skill is that the student be able to expand his experience vicariously.

To bring these benefits to the student, materials chosen must have elements with which the student can identify even if the background and customs of the characters presented are unfamiliar to him. He may not have in Canada the same complex shade prejudices of the West Indies, but he can relate to a character's distress when she is made to feel inferior to those around her or embarrassed about all her earlier associations. The need to be accepted is just as urgent in Alberta as it is in Trinidad or Jamaica.

The language of the novels should be appropriate for the reading level of the class. It should not present so many difficulties as to deny the student any pleasure in the reading. But, as Hook (1972) indicates, if it does not stretch the student, if it provides no new challenges, then he might as well spend his time before the T.V. set. (134) Materials chosen must also be screened to avoid the use of objectionable language which does not form an integral part of the work. In accordance with the general criteria for full-length literature (Appendix A) the selector must also try to avoid choosing works which are blatantly prejudicial on the basis of race, religion, sex or ethnic origin. He must also choose novels that are of manageable length. The criteria guidelines suggest between 100 and 350 pages.

Thus the works to be analysed with a view to selection must be considered from all three perspectives outlined in this chapter. They must, as it were, pass through a number of mental screens in the evaluation and selection process. They must be fair representations of the West Indian milieu; they must be of high literary merit; and they must meet the educational guidelines set for the study of

literature in general and the selection of novels in particular. This sifting is the function of the overview of the next chapter while it acquaints the reader with the thematic trends in the West Indian novel.

Chapter III

TRENDS IN WEST INDIAN NOVELS: AN OVERVIEW

When one is faced with more than a hundred novels and a swelling body of individual and general criticism, the task of organizing an overview into one chapter, which clarifies and gives some impressions of salient points in the major works without over-simplification, seems horrendous. Conscious of the many pitfalls, I have chosen, as a convenient management device, to group the works according to broad subject and theme categories. This pattern of organization seems preferable to consideration by country as the high degree of commonality throughout the research area would make much of the discussion by country unduly repetitive. It seems also clearer than an analysis by ten-year spans from the forties on although L. Edward Braithwaite ("West Indian Prose Fiction in the Sixties: A Survey", BIM, 1968) and the contributors to West Indian Literature (ed. Bruce King, 1979) do identify distinct attitudes that are predominant in the different decades.

Broadly speaking, there are novels concerned with the development of political consciousness of West Indians; novels that explore the lives of the abject poor in search of the forces that keep them apparently lighthearted destitute--intensely human; there are novels that concentrate on the peculiar experiences of West Indians torn between the loyalties of blood and breeding; novels which focus on the immigrant experiences of the sons and daughters of these colonial outposts; and there are novels which attempt through historical

recreation or through fantasy and symbolism to interpret the peculiar nature of the West Indian milieu and the West Indian identity. But it must be clearly understood that while these rough categories may provide convenient tools to assist discussion, they must in no way become pigeon-holes, for the novels themselves by revealing qualities of different categories will defy any rigid boundaries.

History and Political Consciousness

This first category is well supported by Bruce King's (1980) identification:

> Faced by an over-simplistic nationalism, but aware that they were not Englishmen, writers of the 1950's tended both towards the exploration of national identity and towards examining the historical sources of their present condition . . . . Many writers sought ideals in the past. Consequently novels became increasingly, psychological, poetic, or even epic, when treating of historical material formerly thought proper to realism. (27-28)

Foremost among these novels dealing with the political evolution of West Indians and using historical events as plot are Vic Reid's New Day (1949), The Jamaicans (1976), and The Leopard (1958), such novels by Christopher Nicole as Ratoon (1962), Dark Noon (1963), the Amyot trilogy (1964-1965) and John Hearne's latest novel, The Sure Salvation (1981). New Day, which recreates the 1865 Gordon riot and its aftermath was the first to deal consciously and directly with West Indian nationalism from the point of view of the natives. In this way it contradicted any reports of the West Indian past as a time of abject subservience to white overlords. Starting from the 1944 declaration of home rule for Jamaica and flashing back in memory to the 1865 St. Thomas uprising, the participant narrator, John (Piper)

Campbell, proudly relates the struggles against the uncaring British representatives, struggles now crowned with success as Garth Campbell, grandson of the fiery rebel leader, Davie Campbell, takes his place as head of the newly elected house of representatives. Of course, though the Gordon riots and the ghastly hangings which followed were accurate, the Campbell family was Reid's creation. And these determined upholders of the rights of the people seem to suggest that for Reid leadership still had to rest in the hands of the educated middle-class who maintained a protective stance towards the masses. As Sandra Pouchet Paquet (1979) observed:

> New Day makes positive statements about the combined power of an illiterate, poverty-stricken plebiscite, and a socially responsible, light-brown middle-class educated to organise an effective resistance against the injustices of colonial Jamaica. (66)

The novel is, however, significant for other reasons. It marks a departure in the use of dialect in West Indian fiction. No longer is the dialect reserved for dialogue among the peasants, but it is woven into the whole fabric of the work. Admittedly its phrases are not representational local speech, but a conscious blend of dialect rhythms, some biblical lexicon and some original and highly sensuous imagery. It may not be exact dialect but it captures the reader's attention with its startling vitality and, as a modified dialect form, would probably be more easily understood by non-West Indians than many of the more authentic recreations. Characterization of the rebels is romanticised and shadowy, while the authorities in Morant Bay are unfeeling stereotypes. John Campbell himself is real enough

especially as he describes the family's flight into the hills when he was just a boy.

Reid's second novel, The Leopard, was not nearly so optimistic in its portrayal of colonial confrontation. For its historial base the novel turned to the Mau Mau uprisings in Kenya, and with the bitter fighting always on the perifery, the novelist in an intensely personal yet symbolic way follows the last tragic encounter between the black Kikuyu warrior, Nebu, and the white overlord, Bwani Gibson. Later the struggle is between Nebu, fatally wounded, and the crippled half-white son of Gibson's wife and Nebu, conceived years before while Nebu was a houseboy in the Gibson home. Again the characters are more mouth-pieces for the author's evocative outpourings of the dilemma than acutely conceived individuals. Nevertheless, the haunting speech rhythms of Nebu's consciousness cannot fail to grasp and hold the reader's attention. The ironies and symbols are inescapable. Some all pervading fear, not unlike that referred to in Paton's Cry the Beloved Country and here embodied in the leopard, stalks everyone. This is no accurate representation of the Mau Mau crisis and the characters fall short as individuals, but, as Braithwaite (1960) puts it, Reid has a "feeling for the poetry of the spoken word and an imagination capable of giving those spoken words life." (207)

Reid has also broken new ground here in the extension of the concept of the West Indian psyche. As Sandra Pouchet Paquet points out, by focusing on the plight of the "tragic mulatto who is the physically and spiritually crippled product of Europe and Africa," on "Gibson as a decadent white colonial presence," on "the relationship beween the African father and his mulatto son," Reid explores "the

intricacies of racial and cultural tensions in a colonial situation." (67) By setting the conflict in Africa, he identifies "A common plight in a shared colonial relationship to Great Britian." (67)

Reid's latest historical novel, The Jamaicans, goes further back into the Jamaican past for evidence of courage and refusal to submit to the British yoke. History tells of the fierce guerilla raids on the British settlements after the latter had captured the island from the Spaniards. It records the flight of the Spanish Governor and names Juan de Bolas and Pablo de Leon as leaders of the guerillas or Maroons, slaves left behind by the fleeing Spaniards. From these facts Reid uses a majestic, prose style to elevate the resistance to epic proportions. The main characters are Juan, a strong, level-headed and farsighted leader, and Pablo de Leon his second-in-command and an excellent scout but too fanatically devoted to Spain to allow for any compromise. Then there is Kedela, the great huntress from the Yallas plains, one whose great endurance and proud bearing makes her a fitting mate for Juan. There are exciting scenes like the cleverly planned passage to Pigeon Island in full view of the British scouts, and the fire raid on the capital, St. Jago de La Vega. The novel ends with a tragic fight to the finish between Juan and Pablo, but there is hope for the rebels as Kedela will bear Juan's child.

The historical past of Guyana, where the growing dissatisfaction of the slaves climaxes in the disastrous rebellion of 1923, is conjured up in Christopher Nicole's Ratoon. Inspired by the Rev. Scott's abolitionist sermons, the slaves on the main estates in the Demerara region plan a non-violent uprising. But one house slave reports the plot to his master who calls out the Militia and alerts

the governor, and the whole affair explodes into a full-scale war. Woven into this is the story of Joan Dart who is emotionally drawn to a run-away slave who has become the rebel leader. The story makes exciting reading with graphic descriptions of excesses on both sides.

Nicole's Dark Noon is basically about a doomed white creole family living in the shadow of Mt. Souffriere on St. Vincent and the calamitous eruptions of 1902. But it unfolds the horrifying story of the two white brothers stoning Graham Leuchen to death on the mountain when they find out that he, a mulatto, has dared to make their sister pregnant. The situation is even more complicated when the reader remembers that Cedric (one of the attackers), Graham and the sister, Anna, had played together for years, yet when Anna fell in love with Graham, Cedric reverted to the caste system in feeling thoroughly outraged. He did suffer dreadful nightmares after the murder however. The story moves to a melodramatic catastrophe as the volcano erupts engulfing the whole household. Only Charles, the sensitive drunk whose life was ruled by fear of Mt. Souffriere, is left.

The Amyot trilogy presents an exciting, if somewhat sensational, fleshing out of the Bahamian legendary past from stories of pirates and their rich and arrogant descendants. Through these the author portrays the whole complex world of white master/black slave relationships and the strange ambivalence that would lead even the mulattos and some blacks to trade with the slave-owning South against the abolitionist North in the U.S. civil war.

Hearne's The Sure Salvation (1981), set in 1860 when slavery was outlawed in the Empire, describes the strange voyage of the illegal slaver carrying 500 slaves to South America. The ship's cook, himself

a freed Negro assists in a slave mutiny which together with the ship's capture by an official British vessel, allows all surviving slaves to land in Barbados as free people.

John Hearne, Ralph de Boissiere, George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul, Austin Clarke and Peter Abrahams are among those who use the recent past to focus on political and social development in the West Indies. In Voices Under the Window (1955) Hearne uses the Kingston riots of 1944 as the occasion for his dramatization of the melee, and for his sensitive portrayal of the successful lawyer and labour sympathiser, Mark Lattimar, senselessly wounded by a ganga-crazed rioter. What follows as Lattimar lies dying are significant flashes of his past as he slips in and out of consciousness while Brysie Dean, his black mistress, and Ted Burrows, his friend, try hopelessly to keep him alive. In the flashbacks we learn that Lattimar was a near-white who as a child had all the privileges of the upper class but had to face the reality that he was not white. All his associations as a young man had been with whites, especially during his years abroad. With his return home and the death of his father, he felt compelled to align himself with the people's struggle. The book is well framed as the outside noises tell of the chaos and the intermittent gunfire tells of the violence used to quell the uprising. The novel then is more about the ambivalence of Mark Lattimar's attitude and his compulsion to come to grips with a long suppressed part of himself than it is about the Kingston riots. He has stopped running away from the Africa within. His desire to help his people is sincere, but he is not safe in an inflamed black crowd, many of whom still identify a white skin with

oppression. And one wonders, had he lived, whether Brysie would have remained his mistress or become his wife.

The Kingston riots and aftermath are more directly presented in Andrew Salkey's children's novel Riot (1967) where the conflict is given from the point of view of young Gerald Mason whose father is a shop steward for the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union and whose mother is a teacher in the volatile slum area of West Kingston.

Soon after the appearance of Vic Reid's New Day Ralph de Boissiere published Crown Jewel (1952) which had as background the 1935-1937 struggles of the Trinidad workers to get improved wages and working conditions from their crown colony government. Four years later de Boissiere produced a sequel, Rum and Coca Cola, which carried the conflict between the masses and the establishment further with the added complication of the American presence under the British-U.S. ninety-nine year lend-lease agreement. Reinhard Sander ("The Thirties and Forties," West Indian Literature, 56) points out the many parallels between the plot and characters in these novels and actual history. Ben Le Maitre, the wholeheartedly dedicated marxist leader seems to express de Boissiere's viewpoint on the solution to the oppression of the poor. The action exposes the political opportunism of demagogues like Boisson and Joe Elias, and there is hope in the changing attitudes of men like Andre Courdray, and the growing militancy of women like Elena and Cassie, the one-time servant girl. In both novels the intricacies of the rigid caste and shade distinctions are underscored. Rum and Coca Cola shows that the American dollar could transform whores into wealthy entrepreneurs, but that the new affluence was more often fool's gold, that it was a manipulative

tool instituting a change to more powerful and ruthless masters.

George Lamming's first novel, In the Castle of My Skin, though it is more concerned with the evolution in the life of the small Creighton village in Barbados, uses as climactic occasion the island's waterfront strike and its attendant violence from which the young narrator and his friends barely escape. More alarming for the villagers is the break-up of the old system wherein the villagers were poor but were protected by a benevolent landlord. Forced to sell, Creighton leaves the tenants homeless. The schemer is Slime who even uses the profits from a penny bank venture to finance his deal. We are left with a feeling of pathos as the wise Old Man of the yard is moved to the Alms House.

Most of the foregoing novels would be eliminated as choices for Canadian class-room use because they concentrate on specific historical details without providing the universal overtones with which the non-West Indian can identify. In the case of The Leopard the overtones are there but the situation does not give the milieu of the West Indies. The Sure Salvation is difficult reading for the average adolescent and though we learn about the characters, the captain and the crew members, they seem to remain one dimensional. This is not so with New Day, Voice Under the Window, and In the Castle of My Skin, which immediately capture the reader's attention and draw him into this strange yet vaguely familiar world.

In general, the later novels which explore the politics of the Caribbean have been satires, and as such, though not untrue, they should not be the ones chosen to represent the West Indies to

adolescents of a different culture. A brief description of those more recent political novels follows.

Naipual's The Suffrage of Elvira (1958) set the tone as it claimed to give a picture of a small southern Trinidadian village during election time in the 1950's. Through this unbelievably superstitious and quarrelsome community, the author ridicules the workings of democracy and universal suffrage for a largely ignorant populace.

Naipaul's later treatment of politics in the new nations lacks the humor of Elvira but is no less satirical. In The Mimic Men (1967) Ralph Kripal Singh's phenomenal rise to political heights on the fictitious island of Isabella, and his equally sudden fall from grace, highlight the lack of plan or structure in the nation's politics. One article which Singh wrote for the socialist newspaper plummets him to power, but at the pinnacle he realizes that the leaders have "no blueprint for instituting a new order" (Hamner, 1973, 57), that they are mimic men playing roles that are meaningless. Guerillas (1975), also set on a fictitious island during explosive nationalistic uprisings, focuses on the revolutionary force led by Jimmy Ahmed, the half Chinese/half Negro radical who runs an agricultural commune for street louts. By the involvement of the Englishman Peter Roche and his liberal mistress Jane, we see the danger of interference from white do-gooders. The monstrous rape/murder of the friendly Jane by Ahmed plays out for him his brooding anti-white rage which has been masked by a charming and composed appearance. The setting for Bend in the River (1979) is some central African state after independence, but the focus is still on the bungling ineptitude of the new nations, with

their erratic changes from coup to coup. Through the unmotivated changes in the fortunes of Salim, the merchant, we see how unstable any kind of life is in those parts.

The sense of disillusionment with the politics of the new states is also at the core of Austin Clarke's The Prime Minister (1977). The protagonist, John Moore, returns to his island after twenty years of voluntary exile in Canada to take up a post as Director of Cultural Relations. But for the whole duration of his stay, there seems to be a campaign to discredit him. Only after he has been slandered, his files stolen, his office bombed, his house burnt, and he has barely escaped from the island does he realize that the whole campaign was deliberate scapegoating to start some violence that would allow the Prime Minister to assume dictatorial powers.

Peter Abrahams' This Island Now (1966) projects the political scene into the future (about fifty years after independence) when a single-minded messiah of the downtrodden sets out on a mission to reorganize society in the interest of the people. The envitable disillusionment results because, to do this, he abrogates all authority, breaks constitutional rights, abandons the judiciary system, all in the interest of aid for the people. The island's intellectuals are horrified, but as one character, Andrew Simpson, argues:

> When your belly is full and you live in a nice house and your children are in good schools and you have running water and electric light and you can call in your doctor whenever there is sickness, you are likely to have a very different set of values from the man who is hungry and homeless and whose children are not in school and who cannot get adequate medical attention. There are people--not only here but all over in what has become known as the third world--who will happily trade free speech and free institutions for three square meals a day, a roof over

> their heads and reasonable health services. Are you prepared to say they would be making a bad trade? (144-145)

Portrayal of the West Indian Poor

Even more vital in the portrayal of the West Indian experience are the novels depicting the lives of the poor. One group of these novels is generally referred to as the "barrack yard" stories, as the settings are usually slum tenement rooms arranged around a common yard with a single stand-pipe and cistern to provide water and a single outhouse for all tenants. According to the scholar L. Edward Braithwaite (1968) the issues here are:

> How does one come to terms with the almost intolerable burden of poverty that the islands have to bear; with the simple, statistical personal poverty for which the only official solution seems to be emigration and the frantic cultivation of tourism . . . ? (158)

The keynote as Braithwaite observed was struck from C.L.R. James' Minty Alley (1935) which recorded backyard situations revealing the lives of the underprivileged West Indians. Fuller treatment of the lives of those trapped in such circumstances is given in Alfred Mendes' Black Fauns (1935). There the barrack yard is in Port-of-Spain after World War I. Through the graphic dialogue we watch the unfolding of the lives of a group of washer women in the few weeks from the arrival of Ma Christine's letter from her son in New York telling of his planned vacation, to his hurried departure after his two-timing has brought tragedy to the yard. The emphasis is on the characters as they interrelate. In fact, in all this group of novels there is rarely a single protagonist or a single plot in the conven-

tional sense. Stuart M. Hall (1955) explained this development as follows:

> These are essentially novels of society . . . . The self is the social self, the consciousness, a national consciousness. This technique, this refusal to localise the centre of interest in a single character or a limited set of characters (it is the method adopted by Mais' in The Hills Were Joyful) represents one of the most interesting developments of the contemporary West Indian novel. (175)

The reader is drawn in Black Fauns by the earthiness, the vivid local colour, by the paradox of deep faith set in the apparent futility of the lives; by the constant creation of excitement, of dramatic tension in what seems a never-ending or until-death routine. The characters are drawn broadly but each is distinct. There is the ancient Ma Christine who must now live in the reflected glory of her long ago deceased school-teacher husband, the wise mediator Miss Miriam, the bewitching and secretive Mamitz, and the beautiful but timid and tense Martha desperate to find one lover who will not abuse her. Most of the characters are illiterate, but the peasant wisdom and vitality which emerge claim comparison with Thomas Hardy's country folk except that Mendes' low-life people are the main story rather than part of the picturesque background.

The barrack yarders are the main concern of two novels by socialist Roger Mais who was himself imprisoned for his involvement with political unrest, in particular for his article attacking British rule in Jamaica. The Hills Were Joyful Together (1953) transports the reader to a West Kingston tenement yard and later to the General Penitentiary in Spanish Town, Jamaica. The scene has much in common with Mendes' Trinidad barrack yard. There is Surjue the easy-going

gambler and bookie, Rema the pretty Sambo girl whose life is wrapped up with Surjue and who is unable to cope when he is given a five year sentence. There is the gossip and coward Bedosa, afraid to chastise his own son, and Charlotte his wife, who derives patience and courage from her very fundamental religion. There is the youth Manny whose idea of manhood is being the virile stud, and Goodie Johnson the higgler suffering from chronic rheumatism. There is Ditty Johnson the teenage tart, a constant threat to the men in yard, Zephyr the prostitute with the generous heart, and other characters very clearly etched. Their stories unfold and intertwine like a tragic version of a William Saroyan script. For in spite of the indomitable human spirit which keeps these waifs struggling, their lives seem caught in a naturalistic mesh of circumstance.

One character, Ras the handcart man whose motto is "peace and love," is a forerunner of the protagonist John Power in Mais' next novel Brother Man (1954). In a movingly contrapuntal alternation between intense narrative, dialogue, and exotic background description of tropical moon, wind and leaves, the pathetic efforts against destitution are played out, and the horror of victimization of the contemplative Rastafarian leader is re-enacted. This was a true first representation of the Rastafarian as human, for as yet most West Indians dismissed the cult as a filthy lunatic fringe. Here John Power, lovingly referred to as Brother Man, an efficient cobbler, is accepted among the impoverished of West Kingston as healer, helper in a material sense, religious leader, a kind of Christ figure. He is now entirely without malice though in his youth he had had his share of intrigue and deceit. Daily dramas are revealed partly through the

chorus of gossipers in the lane who babble and comment on the news. These gossipers respond with the fickleness of a Shakespearean mob, hailing Brother Man as God's messenger until he is framed and jailed. Then, this fact combined with the quite unconnected news of a bearded rapist-murderer at large sets them against all bearded Rastafarians. The result? A group of them stone, beat and deface Brother Man as he walks at night after his release, and they leave him bleeding in the gutter. Yet next day they shame-facedly come asking about his health after he is rescued by friends. The novel ends with some hope as Brother Man looks to the hills and walks home with his wife Minette leading the way.

For setting, Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin gives us the Barbadian version of the village tenement yard as the novel traces nine years in the lives of a group of boys and the evolution in the life of Creighton Village where everyone is interested in everyone else's affairs, where children under twelve are bathed in the open, where beatings are signs of parental love. Through the sensitive portrayal of the narrator, we get clear pictures of the mother who never stops complaining except when she breaks into infectious laughter, of Bob the shoemaker, Boy Blue the tough shiny-black member of the gang, the village sages Ma and Pa who had done well in Panama, Mr. Foster who absolutely refuses to evacuate his house during the flood and who can be seen perched on the roof as the waters subside. Much humour and local colour are provided as the pranks and anecdotes are recounted. There is comment on the caste system, on the social mores as they affect the country folk, on the peculiar brand of colonial education entrenched, on the war and the rising social

unrest--all given through the perceptions of the young boys and especially through the growing sensitivity of the adolescent narrator.

Naipaul's Miguel Street (1959) handles the same kind of subject in a city slum setting. Here he weaves the tragi-comic lives of slum dwellers as seen through the eyes of a young boy growing up in the area. We hear of the tough mystery man Bogart who patterns himself on the tight-lipped screen idol and who turns out to be a bigamist and must leave each wife periodically "to be a man among men"(16). We hear of Popo the busy carpenter who seems completely in control of his destiny but who falls to pieces when his wife leaves him. We hear of Laura, cheerful though she has produced eight babies fathered by seven different men, yet completely dejected when she finds out that her oldest daughter is pregnant. Naipaul's canvas is a wide one and the stories are really only held together as a portrayal of the whole mosaic that constitutes Miguel Street as it is perceived by the narrator who gradually outgrows the area--mentally as he goes to high school and later gets a scholarship to study pharmacy in Britain, and emotionally as he becomes more critical of and less absorbed by his childhood idols.

Other glimpses of slum life are given in Fitzroy Frazer's Wounds of the Flesh (1962), Sylvia Wynter's Hills of Hebron (1962), Mittelholzer's Corentyne Thunder (1941), Alvin Bennet's God the Stonebreaker (1964), Samuel Selvon's The Brighter Sun (1952), and in the sections of John Hearne's Land of the Living (1961) which deal with the Rastafarian leader, Marcus Heneky, and his association with "Tiger" Johnson, the radical criminal of Shanty Town.

Some time during the sixties a perceptibly more caustic tone entered the novels depicting the poor in the Caribbean. The picture of slum life which Austin Clarke presents in Amongst Thistles and Thorns (1965) is crude and bitter. It seems to be a vomiting out of the author's frustration and disgust at the continued poverty and repression of black people in the islands. The plot shows Milton at age nine, brutally beaten by his harassed mother and by the pedantic schoolmaster, fondled indecently by the neighbour-woman Girlie, almost raped by the friendly and ageing Miss Brewster, principal of the high school for girls. The boy tries running away but is foiled at every turn and the plot becomes extremely complicated. The language is clichéish, the scenes and images more vulgar than is necessary to project the child's view of the circumstances.

Orlando Patterson's Children of Sisyphus (1964) gives an even more devastating recreation of the plight of the impoverished as he uncovers the lives of the inhabitants of "The Dungle"--that lowest of the slum areas of western Kingston where the people live in tar-paper shacks, wrecked cars, lean-tos made of gunny sacks draped over poles; where the usual fare is fought for in the garbage dump and occasionally includes flour and canned meats discarded by the health authorities as unfit for human consumption. Here the Rastafarians and the most bedraggled of the waterfront whores hovel together and dream of the black revolution, or struggle against all odds to rise to at least life in a tenement yard. The tone of the novel is caustic and some scenes revolting enough to upset queasy middle-classs stomachs, but unlike Amongst Thistles and Thorns, the characters ring true. The result is a horrifying social exposé of what the naive tourist in his

search for the exotic could never visualize, a piercing condemnation of a system that ignores such appalling degradation, yet a portrayal whose setting, language, plot and characters provide an artistic whole.

Andrew Salkey's Come Home Malcolm Heartland (1976) is completely set in England but one character, Clovis, a new arrival from Jamaica, explains to Heartland the situation from which he fled.

> I born and grow in that li'l two-by-four islan', back dey so, an' I didn't born wit' any advantage or silver spoon an' such like. I never see nobody tryin' to make life lif' up off my back. The real people in misery. The government is a nonsense government, livin' off the fat o' the lan', an every man Jack in it drivin' roun' in big car. . . . All the governments we ever get full up o' motoris' only. Motor car an' deep freeze an' wife shoppin' up in Miami an' high life an' deception an' 'Merican say-so dictation. (185)

It should not be surprising that Clovis is now so dedicated to making money in his new world that he calmly, dispassionately, takes the job of assassinating Heartland even though he rather likes the man.

In all the novels dealing with the destitute in the West Indies there are pointed references to the religious fanaticism and cultist activities of several of the characters. The youngsters of In the Castle of my Skin and Amongst Thistles and Thorns are caught up in revivalist meetings; Ma Christine of Black Fauns brings hope to the chronically depressed and enhances her own reputation by her card-cutting projections into the future; Charlotte of The Hills were Joyful Together has given herself over to the pocomania brethren; G.B. of God the Stonebreaker turns her backyard over to the jump-up revival group; the kindly grandma of Rum and Coca Cola, to the embarrassment of her middle-class daughter-in-law, continues her obeah practices even after she has been bulldozed from her slum shack. In A Season of

Adventure the Shango-voodoo ritual becomes the catalyst plunging Fola into need to re-incarnate her past. Even in Dumplings in the Soup set in England the characters gather to form a revivalist cell. Whether the worship is Pocomania, Cumina, Shango, Obeah or Voodoo, the devotees communicate with gods or spirits of the other world. They get possessed, speak in tongues, and fall into trances. The leaders claim the power to spirit-heal, to divine the future, and to cast evil spells on the enemy. Though generally scoffed at by the educated middle-class in the novels, these African-type rituals are a significant force among the masses, causing both terror and ecstasy and often rivalling medical practitioners in the diagnosis and cure of illnesses.

Andrew Salkey's A Quality of Violence (1959) gives a frightening but chillingly realistic view of the extremes of the frenzy potentially inherent in the revivalist practices. The setting is St. Thomas, Jamaica during a time of severe drought, and the poor folk of the area are under the influence of Dada Johnson, a flamboyant charletan and ex-convict, who sets himself up as healer and chief obeah-man. He has a vast following, a large blam-yard type meeting house, and several handmaidens and quasi-military officials to attend on him. In his sacrificial rain-invoking hysteria, however, he overreaches his claims and dies with his deputy. Then it is that his wife, Mother Johnson, determined to seize control over the massive flock, declares she will heal the grievously sick child, Doris. Drunk with the new power, she dispatches her henchmen to bring in the village skeptics for punishment. The men bring the level-headed Brother Parkin to whom Dada Johnson had confessed his true history.

Parkin is beaten and tortured, but the mass-frenzy which Mother Johnson has aroused backfires. When the child Doris dies in spite of incantations, and the child's mother tries to hang herself, Brother Parkin, while he is strung up to a kind of gibbet, manages to show the crowd the deception of the Johnsons. Thirsty for blood, the hysterical mob then ritualistically turns on Mother Johnson. When she finds that she cannot change their minds by invoking her dead husband's power, she taunts them into making her a sacrificial victim, with the group as murderers.

Sylvia Wynter's The Hills of Hebron (1962) though flawed by being too much of a diatribe against all the ills besetting society, presents a satirical portrait of the religious community founded by Moses, the black preacher who had spent five years in the asylum after he had attempted to fly to heaven and had landed with a broken leg in a breadfruit tree. Returning with the new concept of a black God whose son and reincarnation he was, he overcame ridicule to recruit a sizable group of artisans among the flock whom he led to the promised land (crown lands for which he had obtained a writ) in Hebron Hills. There he established a religious commune worshipping the black God, whose son and high priest he claimed to be. The community withstood hurricane and drought and even the dramatic self-crucifixion of their Moses, who felt compelled to sacrifice himself to prove the power of his God against the heathen rhetoric of union leaders then sweeping the island.

As Brother Man, Children of Sisyphus, Land of the Living, and Ikael Torass show, the Rastafarian cult has since the fifties become an alternative quasi-religious outlet giving to the alienated and

destitute of the Caribbean a sense of importance.

The many novels featuring the struggles of the West Indian poor have switched the characteristically middle-class focus of the traditional novel into radically new directions in much the same way that modern drama has changed the concept of the appropriate social status of a tragic hero. Most of the novels are worth reading for sociological and literary values, but they have not been selected for Canadian high schools for a variety of reasons. Black Fauns, The Hills Were Joyful Together and Miguel Street are too episodic to be the means of studying the novel form, while The Hills Were Joyful Together, God the Stonebreaker, The Hills of Hebron, and The Children of Sisyphus have scenes that would be considered offensive. A Quality of Violence is an excellent novel, taut with well-conceived characters and some pertinent comments on fraud and religious fanaticism, but these last characteristics could be interpreted as attacks on fundamental religions. This process of elimination leaves Brother Man, with its strong character portrayals, its poignant situations, its foreshadowings and symbolisms, and its careful artisty in structure and style.

Psychological Legacy of Colonialism

As already suggested in the overview of novels exploring West Indian history and politics, and those dramatizing the plight of the destitute, there is a peculiar mix of blood and breeding in a Caribbean context which may seem attractively exotic or quaint to the tourist, but which is at the core of the social and cultural malaise of the region. West Indian novelists since the 1940's have been

endeavouring to capture and define this inner conflict so that by recognition and exorcism of their personal fears and complexes the Caribbean people may chart courses towards responsible nationhood. In fact the whole exodus of West Indian writers which began in the 1940's stemmed to a great extent from the many restrictions imposed by that social context. Yet that was the very milieu which the artist needed to explore in order to determine what was uniquely West Indian and what was shared with the rest of mankind. The novels under review approach these complex issues in many different ways. Some, set on particular islands, depict through intensely personal dramas the relationships among classes, races, and skin shades as these formed or deformed the personalities of the characters in association; others concentrate on the false aspirations which the local environment developed--aspirations shattered by the immigrant experience; still others attempt to pull back from the mass of evidence of current chaos in the West Indies to delve into legend, history and fantasy, in search of archetypical characters and symbols to explain the West Indian identity. These three recurring motifs can become convenient branches of the psychological legacy of Colonialism--the third section of the overview.

Class and Shade Consciousness in West Indian Novels

Mittelholzer's Morning at the Office (1950), by concentrating on the relationships among the workers at the Port-of-Spain Import-Export office during one morning in April 1947, presents a microcosm of Trinidad Society, and in fact gives the parameters of the West Indian social fabric. All the subtle interactions among the fourteen

characters who make up the cross-section of this race and colour-conscious society are probed. At the bottom of the social scale is Horace Zavier, the illegitimate black boy whose mother has discouraged him from any aspiriations to the professional class as he is poor and black. Barely higher up is Jagabir, the sycophantic East Indian, twisted in his effort to be accepted into the closed coloured society. Feeling superior to Jagabir, who after all is only the son of indentured coolies, is the near-black cleaning woman Mary Barker, unable to control her gambling, steel-band-playing son. But social mobility in this pretentious community is not merely according to race for there is Miss Bismath, a cultured East Indian poetess who can empathise with Mary and Horace and yet be contemptuous of Jagabir. Then there are subtle shades of distinction (literally) between the olive-skinned, kinky-haired Miss Kathleen Henery and the near-whites--Mrs. Annette Hinckson with straight, flowing hair, Mr. Reynolds the salesman, and Mr. Lorry the light-skinned casanova--all established members of the coloured elite, and the sallow-complexioned Mr. Benson who keeps his kinky hair close-cropped, the better to gain him access to the enviable class of the coloured elite, yet who sharply attacked white exploitation in the area. On the periphery are the Chinese clerk, Miss Yen Tip, young, vivacious but not yet assimilated into the fabric, and Miss Laura Labelle of Portuguese-French background, but who betrays a French creole scorn of Portuguese. Unchallenged head of this office society are the whites--Everard Murrain, hard pressed to appear busy in his chief accountant sinecure, and Mr. Waley, the manager, who seems unaware of all the social manoeuvering over which he presides. Once

Mittelholzer's complex, claustrophobic office is understood, the many novels focusing on the West Indian social castes come into stronger relief.

The world of the indentured East Indians and their descendants in the West Indies is drawn humourously and often unflatteringly by V. S. Naipual, Shiva Naipaul and Samuel Selvon. In The Mystic Masseur (1957) V.S. Naipaul uncovers the widespread superstition among the ignorant East Indian peasants, separated from their real cultural roots but struggling in an unfriendly environment to preserve a sense of religious and social purity. Only that background can explain the phenomenal rise of the charletan Ganesh Ramsumair, through a series of failures, from peasant to less than average schoolboy, to masseur, to unsuccessful teacher, to pundit, to mystic, to politician, to international statesman. The comic irony is underscored by the skeptical narrator who was taken to the pundit to have his infected leg cured. Most of the characters are Dickensian caricatures, but there is pathos mixed with the ridicule in the protrayal of Ganesh who grows to believe in his own exalted destiny as he plays the role of healer and mystic, but becomes so disillusioned with life at the political top that he repudiates his whole messianic mission to become merely G. S. Muir on his arrival in Britain. At this point he wants to hear absolutely nothing of his religious or racial background. The evolution of the character of Leela, his wife, is also memorable. From shy, frightened child-bride, she becomes the whiner, the disappointed, jealous, nagging wife, and finally the proud, boastful matriarch. Interesting among the East Indian illiterates is the

combination of superstition and a great awe of books, possession of which qualifies the owner as a sage.

In The Suffrage of Elvira (1958), Naipual's comic wit is directed against superstition, ignorance, and racial and religious bickering among the East Indians and Negroes in the Trinidad small towns and villages.

A more complete treatment of the subtle inter-relationships within the East Indian community is provided in A House for Mr. Biswas (1961). Mohun Biswas, his peasant ancestry against him in spite of his Brahmin inheritance, struggles throughout his life for human independence and personal recognition. But he seems doomed to disgrace and anonymity. His life before his almost accidental marriage had been a series of mishaps from the unfortunate anti-water warning proclaimed at his birth, his father's death diving in a mistaken search for the son's puny body, the inglorious end to his training as a Pundit, to the beating he received at the hands of his thieving rum-shop employer. Marriage to Shama drew him into the sprawling and apparently confused Tulsi household. This household was extended family in the widest sense, eroding further Mohun's dreams of independence. The result was stifling, as world without privacy. There were times when Mohun and Shama tried life at one of the Tulsi holdings, away from Hanuman house, but real independence continued to elude him. After a complete nervous breakdown at Greenvale where he was suboverseer and trying to build his house, he was drawn again into the stifling protection of the Tulsis. In desperation Mohun gets himself a job at the Sentinel and thereby achieves for himself some recognition. He then begins a slow improvement of circumstances, with

an added job in the Social Welfare department, and purchases a car. When eventually he buys the house in Sikkim Street, his children have already left home, his Social Welfare post is terminated, and his health is ruined. He struggles to find contentment in the unappealing house as it is the only real place of his own. One is tempted to see in Mohun's struggle for a house the West Indian's search for a separate identity as he tries to free himself from the clinging and suffocating forces that shape him into some debilitated half-man.

Shiva Naipaul's two novels The Fireflies (1970 and The Chip Chip Gatherers (1973) present a no less futile picture of relationships among the first and second generation East Indian immigrants in Trinidad. The brief moments of light can hardly illumine the general emotional gloom of The Fireflies, and whether it is a successful self-made Egbert Ramsaran dedicated to making money, or the emotionally crippled Wilbert Ramsaran, or his broken ghost of a rejected mother, Rani, the characters in The Chip Chip Gatherers are lost and in the long run ineffectual.

Samuel Selvon's Trinidad stories are just as full of authentic local vitality as are those of the Naipauls, but the overall impact is far more hopeful, more positive. Set in a poor rural district near the mangrove swamps four miles from Port-of-Spain and against the background of developments during World War II, The Brighter Sun (1952) traces the painful progress of its young East Indian protagonist, Tiger, towards emotional and intellectual maturity. In the process we see him outgrowing the mindless adherence to traditions, which include wife-beating and excessive alcohol consumption to display manhood, and an ethnocentricity that will not

accept friendship with non-East Indians. By the end of the novel Tiger sees that a white doctor can be more considerate of his sick wife than those of his own race, and that the black Joe Martin and Chinese Tall Boy can be genuine friends. His wife, Urmilla, also develops as a person, from her simple naive devotion to her sometimes irrational and brutal husband. She rises above the narrow racial boundaries in her relationship with the Negress, Rita.

In the sequel Turn Again Tiger (1958), set in the remote sugar cane district of Five Rivers, Tiger's progress towards maturity encounters severe tests. His ability to read and write (he had taught himself the skill in the previous novel) assures him the important role of book-keeper. He is able to claim the respect of his traditional father. But his self-esteem flounders when he is unable to subdue his passion for the white wife of the overseer in the Great House. While he fights his attraction for Doreen, he becomes unsociable, irascible, and turns to drink. Only when he succumbs to her tantalising, wordless seduction does he regain his perspective. The labourers' wives also advance in maturity when they succeed in discouraging the Chinese proprietor from selling alcohol to the men after closing time on Friday nights. Their working together for this project was a step towards racial cooperation and female emancipation from the traditional victim roles.

Shade and class prejudice as a motif surface in the novels particularly concerned with the lives of the destitute. Alvin Bennett's God the Stonebreaker treats this aspect of the society with most irreverent scorn. G.B., the old manipulator from Swine Lane, has one aim beyond her own greed, and that is to have her fair-skinned

grandson, Panty, rise to a station in life befitting his fair complexion. Panty himself, rejected by Mrs. Allen as a filthy nigger waif, can at the end of the novel ponder his strange secret vengeance, knowing that the grandchild she writes so proudly of has been fathered by himself. A similar feeling of spiteful revenge is present in The Hills of Hebron (1962) in the mulatto deacon's relationship with the missionary's wife. Deacon James McLeod is not attracted to her as a woman but "only as a symbol. Conquest of her would prove that his father's white blood had cancelled out the black blood of his mother." (123).

Earl Lovelace, in The Dragon Can't Dance (1979), gives a less sensational and more poignant portrayal of the race conflict through the character of the East Indian Pariag whose overtures of friendship were persistently rebuffed by the negro tenants in the yard. He could no longer pretend that no malice was intended when at Christmas he and his wife Dolly made elaborate preparations to receive the yard tenants and their room was the only one overlooked. The climax comes when racial prejudice is compounded by envy. Pariag dares to purchase a bicycle. It is spitefully wrecked. Yet Pariag grows in stature from this incident. There is pride in his bearing as he carries the smashed bike out of the yard. There is also a greater closeness which develops between himself and Dolly and there is some lessening of the antagonism towards them when her pregnancy wins over the yard women. Really Pariag shows more courage and integrity than the chief masquerader, dragon-man Alrick, for he learns to deal with the inhumanity of his neighbours. He opens a shop in face of their known

hostility, while Alrick never really follows through in making a stand in support of his convictions.

Derick Bickerton's Tropicana (1963) is a tragic tale of poor communication among individuals from the different classes in the West Indian society. Most of the characters--the white expatriates, the white creoles, the mulattos, and the black labourers--are near the breaking point but alienated, like severed islands with no real contact. The English Mary Anderson, for instance, who has been unable to cope since her child's tragic death, is losing all grasp of reality amid the cardboard surface beauty of the island. Her more practical engineer husband, in keeping his grief to himself, has shut her out while the ignorant black gardener, Abel Jackman, broods about vengeance against Anderson for short payment when he is being justly served for so often absenting himself from his gardening duties. The end is bloody and violent, filled with irony and a sense of human waste. The sense of futility is expressed well by Duveen, the cynical English teacher and friend of the Andersons. "The work of the watch that's our universe. The star-screws and the nebulai-springs. The galaxies spinning like fly-wheels . . . . It makes all our suffering meaningless, doesn't it?"(105)

More damaging than these external race battles are the split personalities which race and shade prejudice set up within individual characters. Alfred Mendes was the first to introduce this as his major conflict in Pitch Lake (1934). Here the protagonist, Joe DaCosta, son of a Portuguese rum-shop proprietor, is determined to rise socially although he has spent six years serving all types of people in his father's shop. First he has trouble severing his

relations with the half-Chinese girl with whom he has gone for some time. Joe goes to live with his brother and sister-in-law who are part of the Portuguese elite in Port-of-Spain. But Joe's own weakness of character drags him down. First he gets drunk in the company of a coloured school mate. His sister-in-law arranges for him to go to the society club dance; he is introduced to a willing Portuguese young lady; there is even an engagement announced. But in the meantime Joe has been having a clandestine affair with the pretty black maid, Stella, who adores him. Joe's world begins to collapse. First his half-Chinese girlfriend and her mother noisily accuse him and have to be paid off. Then Stella becomes pregnant. In an effort to free himself, Joe takes Stella to an abortionist but she is too advanced in pregnancy for the doctor to risk an abortion. At this point Joe loses control and kills Stella. The story is a character study of Joe, tugged in all directions by his feelings and his high plans for himself.

Mittelholzer picked up this theme in his Corentyne Thunder (1941) where Geoffrey Weldon, son of a wealthy mulatto (but European looking) planter and a Guyanese East Indian peasant, is torn between his loyalty to his father who wants him to study abroad, and his love for the area and for the East Indian peasant girl, Katree, a relative of his. As Michael Gilkes notes ("Edgar Mittelholzer", West Indian Literature, 1979) this is "the first, though muted appearance, in Mittelholzer's fiction . . . of the theme of division of consciousness."(97) It was to become a recurring theme in his later works.

John Hearne's novels deal most directly with the privileged, the coloured elite on his fictitious island of Cayuna (very closely resembling Jamaica). They explore prejudice as it affects the middle class and the intelligencia, among the whites and near whites. In Faces of Love (1957) there is Andrew Fabricus, near-white descendant of an old planter family, deeply in love with the petite, dark-skinned Margaret Cavarro of Spanish background. The sensitive, intelligent, fair-skinned Oliver Hyde, who is a reformed alcoholic, finds new hope in his association with the refined black girl, Sybil. Most dramatic of the characters is Rachel Ascom, amoral daughter of a German father and Negro mother. She is the femme fatal who exudes sexuality and uses it to gain power for herself. The reader infers that perhaps her personality has been soured by a nagging inferiority complex. Flamboyant yet tragic is Jojo Rygin, a brawny, loud-mouthed, brown-skinned contractor, hopelessly in love with Rachel and certainly too naively trusting of her, especially after she had left him to take full conviction on a bribery charge in which she was also involved. The interloper in the story is Michael Lovelace, the gentle English editor of The Newsletter. His only crime is that he has fallen in love with Rachel. The final catastrophe precipitated by Rachel's double-cross of Jojo leaves us believing that at last Rachel had found someone to make her forget herself, for with her own body she stopped the bullet intended for Michael. Background characters, the Slades and the Bandts are of the Cayunan plantocrasy. Black maids appear content. Perhaps of Hearne's novels Voices Under the Window presents the shade dilemma most directly in the semi-conscious ramblings of the wounded Mark Lattimer.

Ian Carew in The Wild Coast (1958) focuses directly on the plight of those sensitive persons caught in the mesh of shade and class prejudice. Hector Bradshaw is the brown-skinned son of the uncommunicative Fitz Bradshaw, one-time member of the plantocracy, now diamond merchant. But there is some mystery surrounding Hector's birth and his Aunt Hanna seems always to belittle him while he is expected to feel superior to the workers though he feels closer to the servants than to his relatives. At Tarlogie estate, Sister Smart, who had served the Bradshaw family for three generations, mothers the young boy. But as Hector matures, he is torn by a war of the spirit. A kind of dual personality develops, the intellectual and sophisticated against the wild and primitive. As the old estate manager points out, Hector is a product of slave owners and slaves who on one memorable occasion massacred their masters. Hector's wildly passionate surrender to Elsa, the one-time Georgetown whore, seems an inevitable consequence.

If the convoluted patterns of race and class set up tensions in the psyche of the masses and the coloured elite, what traumas are engendered in white creoles in the Caribbean? Geoffrey Drayton and Jean Rys are the best exponents of the dilemma of torn loyalties which often plagued the more sensitive among these. Drayton's Christopher (1959) looks at the confusing West Indian society through the eyes of the young son of a discontented white sugar-cane planter. By the end of the novel his black nurse Gip, the only person who has given him real affection, dies and Christopher's isolation is complete. His highly-sensitive nature, repressed by his circumstances, finds outlet only in his drawings. In the background there is the presence of

racial tension. The kitchen maid when dismissed curses the "white people who think we ain't got no pride".(102) As Kenneth Ramchand (1966) states, this is a sad book about growing up alienated,

> but the author's control is precise, and at no point do we feel that we are being appealed to for sympathy. The book may be compared to a film without a narrator and without dialogue. We are spectators of the silent drama of a sensitive boy's reaction to the events and objects of the caged world which his parents have made for him.(118-119)

Another view of the white creole's dilemma in the West Indies comes in Ian McDonald's The Hummingbird Tree (1969). Set in Trinidad in the nineteen fifties, the novel traces Alan's weaning away from his childhood friendship with his two East Indian playmates, Kaiser and Jaillin, as he begins to assume the role of their master. Pervading the story is a feeling of guilt, a feeling of nostalgia for lost innocence, rather like that of Dylan Thomas' "Fern Hill" or William Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality".

Jean Rhys' recreations are more nightmarish. Her Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) uses Charlotte Bronte's mad Bertha Mason, the growling monster haunting the halls of Thornfield in Jane Eyre, and projects a plausible and pathetic life for her as white creole in a post emancipation Dominica and Jamaica. Francis Wyndham's introduction to the novel explains the plight of such creole heiresses well:

> Products of an inbred, decadent, expatriate society, resented by the recently freed slaves whose superstitions they shared, they [the heiresses] languished uneasily in the oppressive beauty of their tropical surroundings, ripe for exploitation.(10)

Full of pathos the account shifts point of view from the

childhood memories of Antoinette Cosway (Bertha Mason) to Rochester's story of his disillusionment, his growing feeling of entrapment. The final section gives the disoriented snatches of impressions by the mad and imprisoned Bertha. The first section recreates the girl's sensitive imaginings, her withdrawal into a dream world when rejected, her ambivalent relationship with her volatile mother from the suspect Martinique island, her mounting fantasies, her superstitions developing with unhealthy solitude, her pathetic yearning for acceptance in face of both the snobbish rejection of the whites and the spiteful, taunting abuse of the emancipated blacks. We share the terrors she experienced as she watches flames engulfing the family home at Coulibri where her helpless, retarded brother lies trapped. Her mother never regains sanity after the incident and is kept by servants in a house in Jamaica, her wild antics on show for would-be onlookers. Antoinette is rescued by Aunt Cora, an English relative, and sent to the best schools in Jamaica, but there are always the knowing glances and veiled ridicule to face, and eventually comes the full realization of her mother's condition. Marriage to Rochester is a family arrangement to secure an inheritance for him as he is only a second son.

Most of the novels portraying the effects of shade and class consciousness are significant for the study of West Indian culture, but only A Brighter Sun and Wide Sargasso Sea seem to have met all the selection criteria. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas is too long. Mittelholzer's Morning at the Office is meticulously written and with A House for Mr. Biswas would fit well into a university course surveying the motifs of the West Indian novel. But the details,

though artistically appropriate, would probably not capture the imagination of the typical Canadian adolescent. V.S. Naipaul's other novels present such satirical portraits as would give a lopsided view if they are the only West Indian novels being read. The message of black inferiority present in Corentyne Thunder and running through Mittelholzer's later works mark them as unacceptable representatives of the West Indian viewpoint. Finally, what The Wild Coast, The Faces of Love, The Hummingbird Tree, Tropicana and Pitch Lake reveal of the white or near-white dilemma in this claustrophobic world comes with far more dynamic immediacy in Wide Sargasso Sea, while the world of the East Indian engages the reader more wholeheartedly in A Brighter Sun than in V.S. Naipaul's or Shiva Naipaul's works.

Deculturalisation Revealed in West Indian Novels

The pathetic tales of alienation of young white creoles on the islands or in Guyana affected only a few as the white population was comparatively small. Much more crippling to the West Indian persona were the inner conflicts set up by the education which all groups saw as the way to improving their condition. Whether British motives in establishing post-emancipation education in the West Indies were altruistic or selfishly imperialistic, whether the imperialist influence came directly through curricula guidelines, colonial office circular dispatches, parliamentary edicts and imperial visitations, or indirectly through local facsimiles of the Church of England, the British Parliament and the Colonial Office, the resulting effect was deculturalisation of the native West Indian. McCarthy (1983) substantiates this concept of deculturalisation in Barbados by citing

numerous nineteenth century documents related to education in that island. Ironically the parents who were generally uneducated encouraged the separation from roots instilled by the schools although it meant rejection of themselves. G, the youthful narrator of In the Castle of My Skin, is gradually weaned away from his childhood associations and loses the ability to communicate naturally. Questions about his origin still stab him but, with the veneer of English culture imposed on him, the road to self-discovery will be a difficult one. The narrator of Miguel Street undergoes a similar distancing as he becomes more absorbed in the high school world. Ramsay Tull, the protagonist of Neville Dawes' The Last Enchantment (1960), experiences the same deculturation, all with the blessing of his uncompromising Christian father who believed in hard work and the learning one got from the white man's world. Austin Clarke's Growing up Stupid Under the Union Jack (1980), a memoir of his childhood and teenage years spent in Barbados, is an angry attack on that educational denial of roots in the West Indies at least through the 1940's. Up to that time, impoverished children of the slums were bred into little black Englishmen, ridiculously determined to do their civic duty for the "Mother Country". The author recalls his poverty (his mother was a washer-woman), his early years at St. Matthias elementary school where everything was taught by rote, where beatings with the leather strap (alledgedly soaked in urine) were the main method of discipline for the most picayune misdemeanour. His adolescent years at Combermere High School where the weapon became the tamarind switch completes his deculturation. Yet the whole village cheered the boy on to win a place at the well-reputed Combermere.

There an intellectual and social snobbery developed. Yet each day the boy returned home to feeding pigs, carrying water and facing the one-solid-meal a week kind of hardship. Further tensions were set up in his religious life. In the village he was exposed to the extremely fundamental practices mixed with some African rituals at the Church of the Nazarene, while through the school he joined the Anglican choir, a status symbol for high school hopefuls. The school curriculum immersed him in Latin, history, and English literature. As he became versed in world affairs, he imagined himself one of the ancient English heroes and never thought of any ancestry but English. He found himself imitating the Cockney schoolmaster and even dreamt of being called to the bar. However, the memoirs include his having to contend with ridicule from the other boys because of his poverty and his illegitimacy. We have a touching account of visits from his ageing grandmother who begged in the area and occasionally brought him delicacies at the school. His embarrassment was painful and obvious. Only his vigorous participation in athletics helped to compensate for his background deficiencies. One can well imagine the legacy of pretensions, the split personality, such high school training must leave the black high school graduate.

The kind of exaggerated reverence which the West Indian peasants have for book learning, and consequently for anyone parading it, made it easy for the scheming protagonist of Earl Lovelace's The Schoolmaster (1968) to operate. Schooled in the white man's ways, polished, pompous, self-righteous, Winston Wanrick, the village schoolmaster exerts rigorous discipline, and brings learning to enlighten the primitive folk. Admittedly he does much for the people,

initiating progressive ventures. But he unscrupulously bargains to get a cut from schemes which he supports. More tragic is the way he abuses his position as teacher when he rapes the young Christiana and lacks the courage either to accept responsibility for her pregnancy or to give up his gains in the area and leave. Father Vincent, the ineffectual priest to whom Christiana turns in her predicament, confronts Warrick but does not force any issues. He is frustrated by the social inequities of the region but afraid of any change even if it means progress. Like a Greek tragedy, though involving ordinary folk, all circumstances build to irrevocable catastrophe.

The same development of a schizophrenic personality underlies Merle Hodge's delicate treatment of her young heroine in Crick Crack Monkey (1970). The divided world of Tee and Toddan swings precariously between the warm, raucous, vulgar, black low-life associations around Tantie Rose, their father's sister, and the sterile, snobbish, bickering, fair-skinned, middle-class environment with Aunt Beatrice, their mother's sister who is bent on rescuing them from the black riff-raff of the slums. At first the children cling passionately to Tantie Rose and her protege Mikey, relishing the many dramatic flare-ups, the easy neighbourhood relationships. When, after their father's departure "for sea" Aunt Beatrice gains legal custody, they play every trick to force their return to the relaxed life of the Santa Clara district. But eventually the high school culture and Beatrice's prejudices against the uncouth black class so wean Tee away from her early associations that she becomes critical of and embarrassed by everything to do with Tantie Rose.

This schooled alienation from the roots of the basically oral culture which up until the fifties was considered base and vulgar, this general desire to "improve the colour", to deny the "tarbrush", to copy the mannerisms of the dominant white group, explain the ridiculous posturings of many of the immigrants in Britain and North America. The phenomenon is treated humourously in the character of Snakey (Black Fauns by Mendes) who after his sojourn in New York (even without the benefits of high school) can no longer speak or understand the Trinidad dialect, and cannot even recognize the native fruits he used to love. It is treated tragically in V.S. Naipaul's Guerillas (1975) in the character of Jimmy Ahmed (half-Chinese-half-Negro) who had gained in England a reputation for radicalism but who on return to his tropical island furnishes his home with all the trappings of an English bungalow, yet exorcises his antagonism to the whites in a bestial assault on the body of Jane, his white admirer and sympathiser.

George Lemming's Of Age and Innocence (1958) and Season of Adventure (1960) set in San Cristobal, a fictional West Indian multi-racial composite, explore on a more symbolic level the personality conflicts with which West Indians will have to come to terms and which they will have to exorcise before any real gains in national experiments can be achieved. Of Age and Innocence, tracing the failure of Shephard's People's Communal Movement, warns of the unreadiness of the West Indian groups for harmonious advance. Shephard, Singh, and Lee (note the racial groups represented by their names) are committed to the destruction of colonialism, but their violent methods ape those of the colonial masters. As the leaders ponder the pros and cons of a general strike, Shephard seems hesitant

in spite of his earlier blood and thunder, Bible referenced demogogy. Singh and Lee are all for violence. When Bill Butterfield, the visiting Englishman, interrupts the conference to warn of a plot to assassinate Shephard, the movement leaders are immediately suspicious of his white man's intentions. They wrangle among themselves, each one distrusting the others. While these leaders are hamstrung by doubts inherited from their colonial past, a group of street boys, spurred on by legends of their past, make greater headway towards some national unity.

Of Age and Innocence is also a story of personal tragedy caused largely by the crippling disillusionment of Mark Kennedy who after twenty years away from this homeland, returns with his beloved Marcia and their best friends Bill and Penelope Butterfield. But back on the island Mark gets so involved in his unclear search for roots that he neglects Marcia. The results are disastrous. The English Marcia, unable to cope with isolation in this alien world, has a nervous breakdown. The vivacious Penelope, teeming with joyous memories of their previous holidays together, becomes frightened by a growing awareness of her lesbian impulses towards Marcia, and is herself both attracted and repelled by Shephard. Her husband Bill is intrigued by the island and its legends, and even tries to help Shephard, but when his wife and Marcia are killed in the madhouse fire (started accidentally) he blames Shephard's strike call and goes seeking vengeance against the labour leader only to find that someone else has anticipated him, and already killed Shephard. Ian Munro (1979) in his essay on Lamming summarises the agonies of the visitors from England in this way:

> While Mark's failure is in part a comment on the continued inability of the colonized West Indian intellectual to return to his roots, the story of the four English visitors illustrates the contemporary problem of human isolation and lack of communication (West Indian Literature. 135)

Season of Adventure, Lamming's next novel, picks up life in the fictional San Cristobal soon after independence when the government of the state is in the hands of the local elite whose values are those of the recently ousted colonialists. Government and social leaders are therefore completely out of touch with the masses of the Forest Reserve who through rituals like the Ceremony of the Souls in the Tonelle (a Vodoo-inspired conjuring of the past or the dead) and the native rhythms of the steel bands have kept faith with the African roots. Fola, the beautiful middle-class mulatto girl, takes a frightened backward glance at herself as she impulsively joins in the Tonelle dancing. From then on, she is obsessed with finding her father though her paternity has been her mother's carefully guarded secret. The radical painter Chiki, product of the Reserve and now returned to it though educated, promises to assist in her search. He makes a portrait, a version of her father who could be African or European depending on the point of view of the viewer. Fola now sees more clearly the division within herself between her stifling middle-class values and the suppressed part of her linked possibly to her African past. On the political scene, Vice President Raymond is assassinated and in the ensuing furore, Fola sides with the people of the Forest Reserve against her own class. She declares that it is her father who has murdered Raymond. In an effort to control the people, the government bans the steel drums, but on Fola's suggestion all the

bands gather and play and a new government is ushered in. But Chiki's creative talent seems to have dried up. Certainly the message is clear: in the new nations any attempt of the middle-class to negate their past leads to revolution in the body politic and within the individual. Besides, those who aspire to be Europeans are torn within and are never really accepted by either whites or blacks.

The novels focusing on the deculturalisation of West Indians have only been selected in this study where other thematic elements such as the problems of growing up and the question of personal identity have recommended them as being specially relevant to Canadian youths. All these qualities together with vivid characterization, evocative language and stylistic experimentation are present in In the Castle of My Skin and Crick Crack Monkey. Therefore they have been chosen.

Novels of Youth in a West Indian Context

Some of the most delightful and perceptive protrayals of the complex West Indian society have come in the many novels projecting the child's view. Already mentioned as outstanding are In the Castle of My Skin, Christopher, The Hummingbird Tree, and Crick Crack Monkey. Michael Anthony's novels of adolescence, The Year in San Fernando (1965) and Green Days by the River (1967), are certainly worthy of joining this group though social causes are muted in them. In the former, the naive twelve-year-old country boy, Francis, who still wets his bed, must come to grips with a foreign world when he is whisked to San Fernando away from the protection of his family to become house-boy for the querulous Mrs. Chandles and her bad-tempered

son. Sensitive and alert, Francis learns fast how to be diplomatic and non-committal, but he is honest and straight forward unless pressured by fear or hunger. The year of servitude teaches him much about himself and people. His cheerful disposition has brought him friends in the market and at school. Julia, Mr. Chandles' mistress, has taken a special liking to him, and even the grumpy Mrs. Chandles seems more humane as the year progresses.

Green Days by the River covers a period of six months in the awakening of fifteen-year-old Shelly to the manipulative forces around him. Teetering between childhood and manhood, Shelly is confused by his own responses as well as those of his new neighbours and friends. At first he greatly admires the way the Indian planter, Mr. Gidharee, controls his fierce dogs, and he is amazed at the man's generosity. But when he stops pursuing Gidharee's daughter, Rosalie, he sees the sneaking ruthlessness of the man. Invited to join Gidharee in reaping his cultivation in the bush, Shelly's uneasiness grows as he listens to indirect remarks about ways of treating those who have "fooled around" with one's daughter and refused to marry her. Then, after the dogs have been fed special stimulants, the Indian conveniently disappears while Shelly is attacked and badly bitten by the four enraged dogs. Gidharee calmly returns and calls off the creatures. In the weeks later while Shelly recuperates, Gidharee is most solicitous, providing money for Shelly's mother and taking care of his father's funeral. Shelly comes to realize that marriage to Rosalie is the only possible route and not such an unpleasant one. He was attracted to Rosalie and now he stands to receive a cocoa field from

Gidharee as part of her dowry. Gidharee has got rid of his dogs though he now owns a gun.

These novels are memorable without having any political or racial axes to grind. As Edward Baugh states in "Since 1960: Some Highlights" in West Indian Lierature (1979):

> Conentrating on careful recreation of the humble, ordinary life of the rural and semi-rural Trinidad of his youth, Anthony refreshes our awareness of the significance of the ordinary, and of how, in its simplest, homeliest notions, the heart can touch so much that is at once elemental and complex.(80)

Even less involved with the usual pervading themes of this literature are the novels of C. Everard Palmer, which are pleasant recreations of the exploits of young people usually in the rural areas of Jamaica. These, as well as a number of special children's novels written by Andrew Salkey, deal with courage, humour, and affection that give to Caribbean youth a positive image of themselves. Salkey's child characters develop in understanding of the major crises encountered in the islands. Palmer's The Cloud with a Silver Lining (1966) and [redacted]ooing of Beppo Tate (1972) could make acceptable reading for junior high classes but there is nothing in them or in Salkey's youth stories to mark them as sufficiently representative of the West Indian way of life for them to convey to non-West Indians an appreciation of the Caribbean world.

Acute Alienation in West Indian Novels

The tragedy of alienation in the homeland is the recurring theme of the novels of Garth St. Omer. The characters in Nor Any Country

(1960), Shades of Grey (1968) and J-Black Bam and the Masqueraders (1972) become increasingly withdrawn from human communication, yet even the most intellectual among them have failed to come to grips with the real problem of their identity. Instead, they see their dreams dashed by some inimical fate combined with the small-island morality they had sometimes dared to flout. Unable to give of themselves in any relationship, they become hopeless drifters, brutalizing those close to them yet ridden with guilt from their present actions and their past. Purposelessly they continue to exist convinced that they are caught in a naturalistic mesh where "nada is nada".

Nor Any Country focuses on the ambivalent attitudes of Peter Breville who has just returned to his island after eight years pursuing higher education first at the University of the West Indies and later in Britain. He is still suffused with bitterness at his forced marriage (just before he left home) to Phyllis, the illegitimate and impoverished daughter of a white father and mulatto mother. In fact, for the eight years of his absence he had hardly written, yet she had doggedly remained in his parents' house awaiting his return and caring for his abandoned nephew after her own twin infants had died. Peter can find no intellectual or emotional excitement in Phyllis. His only fulfilling romances were in England--the first with the passionate Anna who left him after learning of Phyllis' existence, and the second with the English Daphne with whom he had lived for a while. Now with no illusions, almost as a self-imposed punishment for his youthful indiscretion, he decides to take Phyllis with him as he leaves for his post as Dr. Breville,

lecturer at the University of the West Indies. Phyllis is overjoyed; he is resigned. In the background are his mother whose only consolation is a blind devotion to the Catholic Church, his father hardly speaking, staring sullenly through the window, and his older brother once brilliant, now also speechless, going to his factory job dressed ridiculously like an office executive. In Peter Breville we have a study of alienation and dislocation of those who have left for sometime and can find no connecting points when they return.

In St. Omer's other two novels we see that Peter's experiment of living with Phyllis in Jamaica has just not worked. In the first two years he engrossed himself in his work and the noble task of taking care of her rather like a child. But he tires of this and her slavish response to him. She does not fit into his university world. He becomes irritated by her unpolished speech, her gauche demeanour. He takes up with other women; does everything to drive her away. She becomes a screaming shrew, but she refuses to leave him even when he resorts to physical abuse. She has a child in spite of the beatings during her pregnancy. She tries to shame him back to his conjugal duties by going in person and with the child to summon him from his mistress' home. He tries to shut out her continual and repetitive accusations. She attacks his French mistress and beats her mercilessly. Violence seems to be the only way out of his state, worse than quiet desperation.

Through a series of letters in J-Black Bam and the Masqueraders, we get the full story of Paul Breville's alienation which developed though he had never left home. In these letters he writes to Peter, he attempts to probe the whole masquerade of life. He now understands

the frustrations of his father who, having failed to achieve his dreams, expected to live through his sons' achievements. In high school Paul felt he was rising in the world for his athletic prowess secured entry to the homes of the coloured middle-class. He preened, put on airs, felt superior to those of his area. There was every prospect of scholarships and a brilliant university career, when the girl Patsy, his social inferior with whom in his awakening manhood he had "had some fun", announced that she was pregnant. His refusal to marry her made him a social outcast in that deeply Roman Catholic community. He lost his teaching post and could find no other that was not beneath his "station". He now sees the Church as part of the masquerade with its self-righteous posturing which he parallels with his own affectations. But the masquerade became more garish when Patsy left the child with Paul's family and committed suicide. A flight from responsibility became necessary. When he could no longer endure the stares and taunts, the helpless inactivity, when he had grown weary of the self-pitying plunge into the oblivion of drink, he decided to play the role of the abject penitent with bowed head and daily masses. As a silent well-dressed worshipper, he was given a menial job in the factory. No one now taunts or questions him for he is accepted as mad--he feels the role is his way of dealing with his impossible reality.

The main character in Shades of Grey is university senior Stephenson, another drifting individual, unable to trust, haunted by his past from which he desperately seeks to escape. He is son of an unknown sailor and a peasant woman who later married a coal seller of the hills. Stephenson himself was lovingly reared in the city by

Meme, the seamstress friend of his mother and grandmother. But his only dream in high school (to which he had gained a scholarship) was to get away, to go on. His poor black relatives and even Meme became embarrassments. As customs clerk after high school he tried gathering funds for his escape by taking bribes. Discovery, scandal and conviction followed. The life seemed futile. Much later a chance teaching post on another island and later a scholarship to the university gave him escape, but a blight seems to have spread throughout his being. A glimmer of hope comes with his love for Thea, the pretty middle-class debutante who has beauty, position, brains and yet is sensitive and deeply committed to Stephenson. Perhaps it is the commitment he fears, the need to give of himself. As he recognizes how much Thea means to him, he feels impelled to end the affair. After making love to her with insulting brutality, he bluntly reveals the whole unvarnished truth about himself. They realize that their romance is over.

In J-Black Bam and the Masqueraders Peter Breville sums up the post colonial impasse.

> We are all children, mindlessly imitating adults, informing our fantasy with total and high seriousness. We not only make cakes out of mud. We eat them as well. We are so busy imitating others that we have no time to do anything of our own.(14)

Orland Patterson's revelation of Alexander Blackman's agonized and futile search for roots, and the psychological whole that would attend them, is the subject of An Absence of Ruins (1967). Through the novel we follow the progressive withdrawal of this acclaimed university lecturer from reality as he flounders in efforts to grasp

an identity to make his present existential being meaningful. He develops in the process an actual physical revulsion to his surroundings. He becomes obsessed with the sea, with dissolution, with guilt at being a constant source of pain to those close to him. Once a brilliant Rhodes scholar, he now sees everyone in the intellectual world as phoney. He drops out of all causes, gives up his post and tries to lose himself among "his people". His attempted suicide lands him in jail and there he sadistically concocts a scheme to fake a suicide to make those he knows feel guilty. He bribes a cell mate to wait for a week and then take his clothing and a suicide note to the police. In the meantime he went into hiding in the Hanover hills. The plot worked only too well as it gave his mother a fatal heart attack. Added to his other distresses he now must bear the guilt of having killed his mother. The gulf widens between himself and others. Worst of all he finally realizes that he has all along been trying to maximize his feeling, that his tragedy is his inability to feel, that there is not even guilt with the realization that he has killed his mother.

His estranged wife, Pauline, has freed herself of dependence on him and is now having an affair with Eddie, his boyhood friend and rival. That gives him not the least bit of concern. The epilogue shows Alex a faceless being in the London crowd. His explanation warns of the total nihilism, the disintegration of the persona, which results from the inabilily to make positive contact with the past in determining identity.

> I come from nowhere worth mentioning. I have no past, except the haunting recollection of each passing moment

> which comes to me always as something having been lost. My ancestors, if they existed, left no record of themselves; my mother who also fathered me, I sacrificed to a futile cause many years ago . . . . I cannot say whether I am civilized or savage, standing as I do outside of race, outside of culture, outside of history, outside of any value that could make your question (concerning identity) meaningful.(160)

This group of novels reveals perceptive insights and employs appropriate techniques, but the novels have been eliminated because their stark presentation of alienation gives a more depressingly negative view of reality than seem suitable for study with adolescents.

The Immigrant Experience in West Indian Novels

The last group of novels to be discussed among those dealing with the psychological imbalance left by colonialism portrays the West Indian abroad. Edward Braithwaite in "West Indian Prose Fiction of the Sixties: A Survey" (1968) speaks of the kind of migration complex with which West Indian writers seemed smitten in the nineteen fifties. From those writers--Lamming, Selvon, Mittelholzer, Carew, Salkey, Braithwaite, Mais, V.S. Naipaul, Dathorne, Denys Williams, Dawes, Austin Clarke and Wilson Harris--came a wealth of material dealing with the sometimes comic, often harrowing experiences of West Indian immigrants.

But years before this in her novel Voyage in the Dark (1934) Jean Rhys had explored the trauma of the white immigrant from the West Indies lost in a cold London crowd. Anna Morgan, delicate, pale, always cold, is dumped with no resources in a bleak unfriendly world. She joins an acting troupe performing at Southsea where she meets the wealthy Walter Jeffries who is intrigued by her wistfulness. She

abandons the theatre to become his mistress. But he soon wearies of the liaison, and Anna, who is left drifting with no will to live or means of support, slips into a life of prostitution. She becomes pregnant and is forced to seek help from Jeffries but the financial assistance comes only through his friend and as the doctor patches her up after an abortion his comment is that she will be all right, ready to start over again in no time. But the prospect is nothing but despairing monotony for Anna. Most appealing in the novel is the way it alternates scenes of grey, desolate, wintry England with the lush childhood memories of Anna's Dominican home.

All the other West Indian novelists in exile focus on the non-white West Indian immigrants. Lamming's The Emigrants (1954), contrasting as it does the lusty hopes and expectations of the various passengers aboard ship from the Caribbean bound for Britain with the sad reality of their lives in the Mother country, strikes the chord of general disillusionment. Higgins who on board ship had made great plans to improve himself and become a cook turned into a paranoid lunatic instead. Dickson developed a phobia for eyes due partly to his humiliation when he had accepted an invitation form a white woman only to find upon his visit that she only wanted to gawk at him and inspect him. Tornado, so sure of himself as a passenger, so rash in disposition, was now very subdued and had quietly married Lillian. Collis seems to have gone blind.

Braithwaite's popular autobiographical To Sir With Love sketches the difficulties of a highly qualified black immigrant engineer in search of employment and housing. He dramatizes the cold English politeness, but he shows as well those who were ready to accept the

immigrants as individuals; his landlady who treated him like a son is an outstanding example. The open hostility of his class in the London slums, the remarks of the odd teacher in the staffroom, the insulting restaurant incident pinpointed racial prejudice, but this was not yet the period of the Teddy Boys and the author seems to have had such control as to set him a world apart from the lost souls of Lamming's immigrant crew.

But it is Samuel Selvon's humourous, anecdotal, calypso type portrayal of the West Indians in The Lonely Londoners that stands out as the true mirror of impoverished migrants trying to retain their boisterous, peasant vitality in a freezing climate and their more than chilly English reception. Search for housing, food, jobs, women, were full-time activities often demanding their cleverest strategies. There is gentle humour as the narrator reveals the prejudice of the whites and the awkwardness of the migrants. In language inimitably blending West Indian dialect rhythms with a lexicon close enough to standard English to be understood by English readers, Selvon makes us chuckle at Tolroy who goes to the train station to meet his mother whom he has sent for but sees as well his sister, Agnes, her husband and his Tanty Bessy with bag and baggage to fit into his cramped quarters; or at Sir Galahad, the fashionable Trinidad dresser arriving in the middle of winter in his tropical suit and sneakers and later, when hunger strikes him, grabbing a pigeon in the park while a plump outraged English eye-witness screams for murder and police. One cannot forget Tanty Bessy's loudmouthed geniality or the Nigerian Cap, that charming gigolo using his wits to keep ahead of creditors, and his lady-killer techniques to provide for all other needs. This

vibrant narrative, provoking laughter that is nevertheless close to tears makes the novel more than just immigrant anecdotes. In all the hardships the boys keep sane by reminiscing about times back home. This laughing to keep from crying is evident in Moses' meditations by the river:

> Under the kiff-kiff laughter, behind the ballad and the episode, the what-happening, the summer-is-hearts, he could see a great aimlessness, a great restless, swaying movement that leaving you standing in the same spot. As if a forlorn shadow of doom fall on all the spades in the country. As if he could see the black faces bobbing up and down in the millions of white, strained faces, everybody hustling along, the strand, the spades jostling in the crowd, bewildered, hopeless. As if on the surface, things don't look so bad, but when you go down a little, you bounce up a kind of misery and pathos and a frightening--what? He don't know the right word, but he have the right feeling in his heart. As if the boys laughing because they fraid to cry, they only laughing because to think so much about everything would be a big calamity--like how he here now, the thoughts so heavy like he unable to move his body.(170)

Selvon's later books on the immigrant experience continue the protrayal. The Housing Lark (1956) using the same type of style and characters gives an amusing and satirical picture of the living and working conditions of the West Indian immigrants in London. Moses Ascending (1975) returns to the immigrant theme but now we see Moses at a new stage of assimilation into the English world. He is now a property owner, really a slum landlord except that he occupies the top floor and is engaged in writing his memoirs in language that makes fun of all the cliches of the British education system.

O.R. Dathorne's Dumplings in the Soup (1963) is the London version of the tenement yard of the West Indian poor. No. 30, we are told on the first page, is the haunt of the doomed where the

inhabitants are like castaways from another planet, sharing a common kitchen, a single lavatory and the same plight of disorientation. Here a cross section of West Indian peasant and one-time middle-class are all lumped together as black immigrants. The erstwhile student-nurse, Hazel, now lives with Bigphil; the light-skinned Mr. Phillips has the bus conductress as his mistress. Into their midst comes John (Jiffy) Jacket fresh from Trinidad, polite and quiet, anxious to pursue his studies as an architect. Loud arguments and frequent love-squabbles abound. The story is humourously told in colourful dialect; but we cannot fail to see the pathetic disorientation of these lost souls. At one point Jiffy admitted that coming to England was an education in itself, that "in the West Indies everyone was play acting at being real. Here the reality was so real that it frightened you with the immensity of it."(30) Hazel whose refrain was "Every man is a dawg" blamed every human problem on the male sex. Wistfully she recalls "Home, my father have a car and he won't even let me look at a man. But here . . . " and her voice trails off. Jiffy, more perceptive, sees: "There ain't no standards to go by, Hazel. That is the trouble, yes. Home, you belong to a church and a family and a circle. They got certain things you don't do."(30) Then Hazel summarizes the difference between their situation and that of the normal immigrant. "Yes, but here you black. Anything goes. We is all the same tarbrush and everybody walk pon we."(30) Being non-white the middle-class West Indians can find no place among the middle class of the "Mother Country".

E.R. Braithwaite's Choice of Straws switches the focus to the tragic loss experienced by both whites and blacks in the racial wars

of the Teddy Boys period. It tells the story of the white twin brothers, Dave and Jack, who after their father's mugging by blacks take to attacking lone blacks in the area. Their attack on a man in Stepney, however, goes awry. In the fight Dave fatally stabs the man and is himself bleeding. To escape detection the boys split up, but later that night Dave is killed in a car accident far from the murder scene. The novel deals particularly with the aftermath of the tragedy as seen by Jack, the remaining brother. His simple mother is unable to accept Dave's death or that he caused it himself. She blames Jack and all blacks. His fairly tolerant father is torn by the harrowing effect of the tragedy on his wife. Complicating the situation is the fact that the person who had given Dave a ride and had died with him in the auto-wreck was an eminent black doctor for whose sister Jack subsequently develops an attraction. Through Jack's perception we see the bitterness, the mutual prejudices, the irrationality, the remorse. We see Jack's feeling of rejection at home and eventually at his girl-friend's. We see his sheer panic as the detective fits together the disparate pieces of the murder-accident puzzle together. Brâithwaite's highest achievement in this novel is his ability to get into the skin of the apparently callous white, a fine view of the other side of racial confrontation from a West Indian writer.

Andrew Salkey's Escape to an Autumn Pavement (1960) encapsulates the disillusionment and consequent alienation of the intellectual who escapes from the claustrophobic, middle-class, mother-smothering, church-dominated world of the West Indies in the fifties but finds in his new world of England nothing with which to make spiritual contact. In a time of mounting racial animosities as evidenced by the

"keep Britain White" pamphlets and the blatant hostility of the tenant Trado, the story of Johnnie Sobert comes to us through the soul searching personal dialectics in his diary. Himself a member of the Jamaican middle class but now forced to work as a lounge waiter hustling tips and often arranging illegal side attractions for the American G.I.'s, Johnnie becomes more and more cynical about race relations. He points out that the whole British education system including most textbooks would have to be changed if there is to be elimination of anti-black prejudice. He has an affair with the white Fiona, Trado's wife, but he is revolted by her clinging passion. He finds himself drawn to Dick, the English chauffeur who is homosexual, yet to the end he refuses to accept the fact that he may be a latent homosexual. Nevertheless when he returns home to find that Dick, with whom he had been sharing a flat, had left him to decide about his homosexuality, he is overcome by a terrible emptiness and aloneness. He is in this English world for which his education and middle class upbringing have prepared him, yet neither memories of that Jamaican past, the passionate attentions of Fiona, the money-making schemes at the club, nor Dick's quiet importunities bring any measure of satisfaction. He becomes almost as alienated as Alexander Blackman in An Absence of Ruins.

Not nearly as many novels explore the West Indian immigrant experience in North America, but those available extend the pattern of disorientation and alienation in the British setting. Foremost writer on the subject is Austin Clarke who resides in Toronto. Based on his trilogy A Meeting Point (1967), Storm of Fortune (1973), and The Bigger Light (1975), Clarke can justly claim to be the exponent of the

peculiar problems of working class Barbadians trying to settle in Canada. Through stories of the immigrant domestics working in the homes of rich white folks, we see the trials and exploitation in no uncertain terms; we witness the harsh black/white confrontation in our mosaic. In Bernice Leach of The Meeting Point, we see the ambivalence of the desire for the warmth and freedom of home with the realization of the material advantages afforded by her Canadian bondage. Grossly underpaid and often treated as a non-person, she finds little underhand ways of evening the score. To her friends she loudly abuses her employer, but she fawns upon her when she is around. Gladys Burrman, the socialite employer, eventually overcomes her instinctive revulsion to the black, loudmouthed Bernice and even shows genuine concern when the latter believes that her mother has died in Barbados. Gladys' corporation lawyer husband, risen from the slums, rapes Estelle, Bernice's visiting sister, but will accept no responsibility when the girl becomes pregnant. The plot becomes rather sensational, but enough is shown of housing problems, attacks on blacks who date white women, and the general culture clash to make the novel a significant exposé. The Bigger Light pulls back to the more personal tragedy of the severe disorientation and alienation. Boysie, the Barbadian immigrant, is determined to fit into the Canadian milieu. He tries to achieve an intellectual identity, to make his language more correct, to separate himself from the crudities of his fellow West Indians and the ageing frigidity of his wife, Dot. But his efforts at intellectual discourse, as evidenced in the articles he feels compelled to write for the newspapers, are ridiculously flawed. He finds he is unable to communicate with Dot.

Loneliness and frustration grow when at first he tries to explain his convoluted thoughts to Dot and she hardly listens. He begins then a neurotic dialogue with himself, as he struggles to acquire the new language of philosophy, psychology, and sociology when he can barely manipulate basic English.

Ian Carew's The Last Barbarian (1961), set in a Harlem tenement, gives the New York version of the immigrant experience at least for Don, the West Indian. Frank Hercules' I want a Black Doll moves away from the immigrant world to deal with the problems of miscegenation in the American context. The novel effectively shows the author's ability to reveal the deepest thoughts of both black and white contenders. There may be some unanswered questions about the complicated plot but both sides in the traumatic encounter are fairly portrayed. One feels drawn into this tragic account of the social stresses which blacks and whites place on mixed marriages.

Of the novels treating the immigrant experience, Austin Clarke's being set in Canada should have most relevance to our cultural pattern, but the scenes and some of the dialogue involving his Barbadian domestics could cause offence as being too crude and explicit. Among the others, Choice of Straws though well-written only indirectly portrays the West Indian immigrant, Escape to an Autumn Pavement is too negative, To Sir With Love though written as an autobiography seems a little unreal. In fact, The Lonely Londoners is recommended as capturing the humour and pathos of the West Indian in London, as finding the language form which epitomises that experience, as having no controversial scenes and as being of manageable length.

Psychic Healing of the Rifted West Indian Personality

Even the most cursory review of West Indian writing shows that concern with the conflicting personalities of the mixed population of the area is most persistent among themes. As Michael Gilkes declares in his study of the Guyanese novelist Wilson Harris (1975):

> The astonishing upsurge of writing in the Caribbean--in the period between the 1950's and the 1970's a significant and rich body of literature was created from virtually nothing--is clearly related in a very special way to the West Indian sense of rootlessness, and the consequent need to formulate a racial and cultural identity. Post-colonial West Indian societies were in a sense forced to come to terms with their own broken cultural ties with the past and their new racial and cultural links with the present. (X)

The novels considered in the section "The Psychological Legacy of Colonialism" have so far demonstrated realistic treatments of causes and effects of the calamitous disorientation and eventual acute alienation of West Indians at home and abroad. The search for balance, for wholeness of being, in such a racially chaotic setting could be considered the foremost distinguishing characteristic of the West Indian novel, and, as more experimental approaches to this unique condition evolve, they awaken genuine universal responses and promise to extend the traditional confines of the novel into untapped psychological realms.

Mittelholzer's Corentyne Thunder (1941) sets the pattern. His leitmotif throughout his novels is, as Michael Gilkes states in his lectures on Racial Identity and Individual Consciousness in the Caribbean Novel (1975), the attempt and failure to reintegrate, by effort of will, an inherited psychic disunity. What is peculiar about Mittelholzer's interpretation of the personality split is that he

assigned all the low, primitive impulses in his characters to their African heredity, all the noble, spiritual, cultural, intellectual tendencies to their European ancestry. Geoffrey Weldon is therefore doomed by his very mulatto state to indecision. The dichotomy is set between the noble, intellectual, progressive world of his father and the sensual, emotional life with Katree.

This perspective underlies Sylvia's tragedy in The Life and Death of Sylvia (1953) another novel by Mittelholzer. Her efforts to be accepted are pitted against not only the callous colonial middle class society but a genetic taint within herself as a mulatto. The theme becomes even more pronounced in the Kaywana trilogy. Children of Kaywana (1952), The Harrowing of Hubertus (1954), and Kaywana Blood (1958), while developing through the unfolding of the lives of several generations of the Van Groenwegel family a veritable Guyanese epic, present the warring elements in the characters of mixed blood, and imply the need for psychic integration. The same personality haitus seems to have plagued Mittelholzer himself as he strove for alignment with his European ancestry and elimination of the racial damage of the Negro strain In him. His autogiography A Swarthy Boy (1963) gives ample evidence of his struggles to separate himself from the West Indian environment and his adoption of more and more reactionary attitudes in England. His own sensational suicide is indication that he did not achieve the desired wholeness within himself.

V.S. Naipaul Is another who feels that the racial and cultural mixtures of the West Indies can only create fragmentation of the psyche. On a symbolic level his A House for Mr. Biswas becomes an agonizing struggle of the main character to be a whole identifiable

human being. Viewed in this light, the novel embodies the whole problem of rootlessness in the make-shift society. That each dwelling which Biswas attempts to build for himself is a little more tangible than the previous one, that even the final house on Sikkam Street seems ungainly and unstable, is then significant as representing stages in his evolution towards a whole personality which to the very end remains erratic and tentative.

In relation to this motif, Ralph Singh's condition in The Mimic Men is a natural extension, as Michael Gilkes points out in his study, Wilson Harris and the Caribbean Novel (1975). The novel Mimic Men, opens with the image of the English boarding house as a synonym for the "rootlessness and perfunctoriness of the hero's existence." Singh can see no hope of wholeness in the bits and pieces of cultures in the West Indies, but he himself is its product, an emotional cripple, unable to give himself actively to the European world to which he returns.

Andrew Salkey's Escape to an Autumn Pavement, Orlando Patterson's An Absence of Ruins, Denis Williams' Other Leopards, and Noel Williams' Ikael Torass (1976), and all of Garth St. Omer's novels explore further the psychological imbalance, the near neurotic obsession with identity among West Indian intellectuals. Denis Williams does suggest in his novel and Noel Williams in his that the way to sane reintegration is through the folk, or through a return to African roots. In Other Leopards the protagonist symbolically kills his white employer and becomes the ever-watchful hunter. In Ikael Torass, Michael gradually sheds all the trappings of pseudo-

intellectual, hypocritical, self-indulgent middle-class and attaches himself to the victimized Rastafarian subculture.

George Lamming, however, first mapped out progressively the route to psychic healing of the divided West Indian personality. His novels taken together reveal the chart. It starts in In the Castle of My Skin, where G withdraws from his peasant roots, moves through the disillusionments of the characters in The Emigrants and the unhappy attempts at integration of Of Age and Innocence, and concludes with Chiki's and Fola's return to their roots in A Season of Adventure. Water with Berries (1971) shows further the catastrophe which results from inbred distrust between the white and black figures in the drama. In all the novels, the characters from the colonial world must confront the European world to begin definition of self. Trumper in In the Castle of my Skin comes back from the United States with the new realization that he is a Negro. Chiki, the artist in A Season of Adventure, accepts his past when he returns to the Forest Reserve after his sojourn in Britain. In that novel it is Fola's white boy-friend who first takes her to the ritualistic Tonelle and who thus awakens in her the buried black past. If, as Ian Munro suggests in his essay on Lamming (West Indian Literature, 1979), Water with Berries is read as a kind of Prospero/Caliban interpretation of the colonial endeavour, then Teeton's overprotective landlady represents Prospero. The Caliban figures are the three colonial artists who have lived for seven years in England after being dispossessed in their own land. Roger, the painter, fearing the fruits of miscegenation, accuses his English wife of infidelity when she becomes pregnant. Unable to handle this distrust, she commits suicide. The writer,

Teeton, has abandoned his wife Nicole in San Cristobal because to gain her husband's release from jail she had given herself to the American ambassador on the island. This rejection of her sacrifice eventually leads to her suicide. All three colonial artists (this includes Derek, the actor) are caught up in acts of violence which become clear in light of the Prospero/Caliban analogy of Shakespeare's Tempest, already outlined by Lamming as the colonizer/slave relationship (Pleasures of Exile, 1960). Teeton meets Myra, the English prostitute who had been raped on San Cristobal by her father's servants. Thus Myra takes on the character of Miranda assaulted by native Calibans, but her father's brutality to his colonial underlings no doubt precipitated the brutal attack. Here the suggestion is clear; the experience of slavery and colonialism has scarred both the coloniser and the colonised as Munro, in West Indian Literature, indicates. This idea is the main one in Lamming's Natives of My Person (1972) where the crew members of the ship Reconnaissance sailing in some indeterminate time between Europe, the Guinea Coast, and the West Indies, reveal those scarring effects. One particular effect highlighted in both of these most recent novels is the brutality to the female which aggravates the personality, maiming all concerned.

Even more intense is the search for healing balms to administer to the rifted natures of West Indian compatriots. Most of Harris' novels describe journeys into the jungle interior of Guyana, but it is not long before the reader realizes that the real journey being undertaken is also an internal one, a searching within the human being for the essence of wholeness. In a cyclical way the Guyanese quartet presents the framework and the ramifications of his themes in a series

of allegories. Palace of the Peacock (1960) traces the journey of Donne, a white creole rancher, and his racially mixed crew as they seek out an Amerindian district in the remote Guyanese interior. After many struggles, the group finds that the elusive Amerindians have fled further. A series of misfortunes besets the searching party, killing them one by one. In the end the empty boat is left adrift. On one level this tale is a recreation of the colonists' early explorations of the hinterland, or the modern Guyanese attempts to reclaim the land. But there are deeper psychological implications. The interior journey of those characters so racially mixed is the search for the most secret self, especially as description, character and plot details all underscore this.

In The Far Journey of Oudin, a novel in which past, present and future time merge surrealistically and characters are uncannily like others already dead, a group of three murder the idiot brother who has been bequeathed their father's inheritance. But each of the plotters is destroyed by some nemesis. Then at the request of the greedy money-lender Ram, Oudin, a mysterious figure resembling the murdered brother, kidnaps the young daughter of the plotters. Oudin, however, takes the young maiden as his own bride and relinquishes his role as slave to the money-lender. Upon Oudin's death, the widow manages to retain all of Oudin's possessions and gains her own freedom by allowing her child to become the money-lender's heir.

At the deepest psychological level, Oudin, who appears mysteriously, can be seen as "the psychic need in man which surfaces periodically . . . to redress the balance of conscious activity." (Gilkes, 1975,52). The young girl whom he marries and who leaves his

child to be heir of the rapacious materialistic Ram, represents on different levels the primitive folk, the land, and ultimately the core of the whole being at last set free. The money-lender then embodies the flawed nature of man seeking to dominate and repress those subconscious and visionary yearnings which must unite and bear fruit within him before he can be in tune with himself and his surroundings.

The Whole Armour (1962) takes the search for wholeness for the Caribbean persona into the coastal region near the mouth of the Pomeroon River. There Magda, a mixed-breed prostitute gets the White Abram to shelter her son, Christo, who is sought by the police for an alleged murder. Abram dies as he argues with Cristo who is forced by his mother, in her further efforts to protect him, to dress the rotting, half-eaten corpse in his own clothes. She then spreads the news of Cristo's disappearance and the police assume he is killed by a marauding tiger. At the wake which Magda holds for her "dead" son, the girl Sharon is reunited with Cristo. They have an idyllic romance in the forest before the police, now informed of their presence, surround their forest cabin. Here there are several levels of ambiguity including obvious political and religious connotations. But again the main characters can all be seen as prototypes of that inner search for the armour of psychic wholeness. Cristo and Sharon seem to undergo a scourging, purifying process before becoming fully united beings.

The Secret Ladder (1963) the last novel of the quartet, has much in common with The Palace of the Peacock. It is set in the drought-ridden area, the upper reaches of the Canje River where the main character, Fenwick the surveyor, is with the aid of his racially

mixed gang charting the changing levels of the river preparatory to a water conservation scheme. Their work is sabotaged by Poseidon, an archetypal black, and his ragged band who fear destruction from the scheme. Fenwick manages to overcome his initial fear of Poseidon, and his crew undertake a seven day pilgrimage of self discovery during which his men meet several mishaps. In one encounter Poseidon falls to his death, and the novel ends with Fenwick's vision of integration of personality, really a kind of birth in death situation. In the mixed racial background of Fenwick himself (he had European, African, and Amerindian forebears) we can see the typical Guyanese man. Through his racially mixed crew we see a microcosm of Guyana, of the whole West Indies really. Poseidon's name allusively suggests the mythological sea deity, and descriptions in the book liken him as well to Merlin. Black, raggedly dressed, and barely articulate, he becomes a symbol of the deeply buried subconscious self which we fear but must face. It is significant too that the death of Poseidon is not his end as the reservoir plans require digging up and rehousing his remains. The whole surveying mission becomes the perfect allegorical medium setting up guidelines for charting the course towards responsible nationhood, or the process towards psychic and spiritual rebirth of the divided Caribbean man. (Gilkes, Wilson Harris, 87).

Though the novels discussed in this subsection of psychic healing are important for a full appreciation of trends in Caribbean fiction they have been eliminated from the selection for Canadian high schools for different reasons. Mittelholzer's emphasis on the Negro "taint" is too negative and simplistic an interpretation of conflicts in the Caribbean to represent the conflicts fully. The language and

some situations in the novels would also present problems as being crude and at times too explicit for class-room analysis. Lamming's later novels and Wilson Harris' novels are eliminated as being too allusive and difficult for non-West Indian youths to appreciate. Naipaul's House for Mr. Biswas is just too long to be one of the many pieces of literature to be studied in any one school year.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NOVELS

David Daiches (1948) declares that the function of criticism is "to interpret a work of literature to the reader, to help him to understand and appreciate it by examining its nature and exhibiting its merits". (7) The problem he continues, is that merits imply pre-existing standards so that the critic cannot just exhibit the merits of the work but he must also explain why they are merits; i.e. "reveal his standards and justify them." (7) Where the criticism is to be of the novel, that varied and still evolving art form, the critic can easily become lost in the debate between subjective and objective criteria, or between those who claim that the work is vitiated by being in some way propagandist and those who say it can be enhanced by bearing a message. As with African novels in English, West Indian novels express strong views on the social environment which produces them. No pure "art for art sake" theory of criticism can ever be sufficient for their analysis. Africa's Chinua Achebe (1975) declares:

> Every literature must seek the things that belong to its peace, must, in other words, speak of a particular place, evolve out of the necessities of its history, past and current, and the aspirations and destiny of its people. (11)

Moreover, Kenneth Ramchand in his analysis of the West Indian novel stresses that "the West Indian novelists apply themselves with unusual urgency and unanimity to the analysis and interpretation of their society's ills". (4) The critic of these novels must therefore keep a

balance between content and form in his deliberations.

When the task is to analyse materials selected to extend the students' sociological awareness and aesthetic appreciation, then the critic must question whether the work authentically conveys aspects of life in the world for which it speaks, and must concern himself with whether the work can help the reader explore his own nature, his own environment by throwing light upon the human condition. He must also consider whether the structure and language are appropriate vehicles for the content and overall theme, and whether the situations will be too indelicate for class-room discussion.

Each of the eight books selected will accordingly be discussed on the basis of its content, its structure, and its style. Theme development and characterization with their relevance to the West Indian context and their elucidation of the human condition will be dealt with under content. Some analysis of the design of the work, the special features of the tone and diction is included. In this way, teachers will be able to determine which of the novels best suits the needs of their students.

Vic Reid: New Day

New Day is an historical novel, an imaginative recreation of the circumstances surrounding two major events in the development of Jamaica as a nation, which focuses on one particular fictitious family from which sprang leaders of both events. As the author, Vic Reid, explains in his note to the 1949 edition, emancipation of the slaves in 1838 financially crippled most planters and left many of the large estates abandoned since few Negroes wished to labour on plantations

when they had the option of engaging in subsistence farming for themselves. By 1865 three years drought made conditions intolerable especially as all levels of government ignored the cry of the people for any kind of political voice in their country. The Morant Bay rebellion of October 1865 was the result. The recorded facts are that the chief magistrate of the St. Thomas parish, members of the parish vestry and hundreds of rebels were killed. Governor Eyre hanged Paul Bogle, the leader, and William Gordon, a sympathetic member of the assembly. Martial law was declared. The authorities in England recalled Governor Eyre as punishment for his excessively violent retaliation. For eighty years afterwards Jamaica remained a crown colony ruled almost directly from Britain. But in 1944 after more violent struggles, the island was granted home rule and began its "New Day" towards responsible government.

With the exception of persons actually mentioned in the historical records, the characters of the novel are fictional. Reid explains that his purpose is to transfer to paper some of the beauty, kindliness and humour of his people, "weaving characters into a frame of these eighty years and creating a tale that will offer as true an impression as fiction can of the way by which Jamaica and its people came to today". (viii)

That Reid has done this in his characters (particularly in his portrayal of Johnny Campbell and the fiery Davie Campbell), through his lyrical descriptions of action and setting, and through his peculiar, pioneering blend of the dialect in narration and dialogue, is evident and ensures the novel a place on the select list.

The novel opens on the eve of the Royal declaration of the new

constitution for Jamaica. The eighty-seven year old Johnny Campbell has come to the city and will proudly watch his grandnephew, Garth, the likeliest leader of the new government to be established, as participant in the official declaration. Unable to sleep, the old man's mind flashes back to 1865, and in a vibrant historic present, he relives the violent confrontations which started then for the Campbell family and for the island the uphill journey now to be crowned by the new constitution.

Then it was that the strong-willed, idealistic, eighteen-year old Davie Campbell had joined Deacon Bogle's Stoney Gut band in the hope of getting redress for the oppressive rule of the rich, white elite at a time of great famine among the poor. The brutality of the authorities springs to life in the memory of old Johnny for he was often in those perilous times the wiry messenger for his courageous brother Davie. During the time of martial law, when innocent and guilty alike were hanged, shot, and tortured, young Johnny had watched as his loyal and God-fearing father and his brother Emmanuel were shot by redcoats. He himself barely escaped with Davie and Lucille, Davie's fiancé, to the uninhabited Morant Cays.

The character of the narrator as a young boy comes across clearly. Affectionate but with a playful sense of humour, he and his sister Naomi often secretly raced tiny crabs between them on the church bench during Sunday services. At eight he feared his father's belt and was human enough to feel "nice" when someone else was getting the strap, but in an emergency, especially if his revered brother Davie was in danger, he would face any odds. His ordeal making his way through the Morant Bay crowds to reach the lock-up where Davie was

held prisoner, or his daring journey alone into Stoney Gut to acquaint Bogle with the fate of the prisoners, attests to this. He hero-worshipped his restless, undaunted brother, Davie, but later he could recognize when Davie's obsession had transformed him into a grim tyrant. Nevertheless, bitterness at Davie's death at the height of prosperity on the Cays clouded Johnny's reason. He now recalls painfully his own bigotry, the speed with which he cursed Lucille's desertion when, in fact, she was no more able to control her fate in the hurricane of '74 than her dead husband could. His assumptions concerning her liaison with Captain Adams on whose ship she was caught in the storm were unworthy of the once open-minded, generous-spirited boy of Salt Savannah. Yet the character flaw is plausible in light of what Davie's death and Lucille's disappearance must have cost the seventeen-year-old. The remorse he still feels for having rejected her one cry for help in that letter which reached him a year after the hurricane is sincere. Now in his old age Johnny (Piper) Campbell is understandably disordered with his memories sometimes running ahead of logical sequence, sometimes backtracking to fill in the gaps. If the author's grasp of character weakens, it is in the last sections telling of Garth's political apprenticeship when so much seems to be told of political arguments and strategies.

Davie's character stands out in bold relief. He, "the man for the glory" rises to heroic stature in the dialogue and actions of 1865. Yet he was intensely human too. After his settlement on the Cay he loses much of his warmth, his love of fun and life itself in his single-minded dedication to building a Christian community. Davie's actions had to be extreme; having put his "hand to the plough"

there could be no moderation of his zeal which drove out personal tenderness.

Gentle, affectionate, high-spirited, Lucille Dubois makes a fitting match for the firebrand rebel Davie. But it is also understandable that she should grow unhappy in the life of unmitigated drudgery he made for her on their island. The tragic twists of fate which follow her visit to Captain Adam's ship seem to have robbed her of any control over her fall into degradation. Coincidence as character determinant is rather strong in this part of the narrative.

Garth Campbell, the grandson of Davie and Lucille, and reared by Johnny, is the reincarnation of Davie's courage and determination with the sobering influence of his own father's business sense and university education and legal expertise. The warmth and bubbling sense of humour are still strong in the young political leader.

But what really matters and what is most pronounced in the novel is the way the reader is transported to great historic times, the way the narrator builds his characters into epic heroes and yet manages to keep those personalities intensely human.

With a real feel for the West Indian spoken word, Reid creates a kind of modified dialect, combining West Indian rhythms and candences, a mildly archaic lexicon reminiscent of the King James version of the Bible, and some typical syntactic peculiarities of Jamaican speech. This presents no real difficulty beyond what can be clarified by reference to the brief glossary and dialect note at the back of the book. The result when woven with an amazing number of sense images, is a work of dynamic tension and poetic charm. The homely comparisons are particularly striking. For instance, when Johnny recalls his

father's angry questions to Davie, he says: "Barrack-cart going to market on Saturday-day sometimes has no grease on axle, and that time the iron rubs on mahoe wood and so is my father's voice." (17) When the father straps Davie, Johnny explains: "Father is a cane-band shaking in the breeze. Trace-leather is cassava-beater flailing on David's shoulder" (18), and he describes Davie's reaction thus: "Thunder-head for day-cloud and the sun peeping through blackness on gray water in the Bay, so is Davie's eyes." (18) In the same context, his mother trying to intervene is "screaming like Kling-Kling bird homing on evening wind" (18) and, as she begs Pa John to have done, she is "Kling-Kling pecking at rain-beat hawk." (18) The bigot pastor Humphrey as he delivers his sermon on rightful authority is satirised, his "long neck shot out, then drew back into his cassock like iguana in stone-hole." (47)

Scene descriptions are equally memorable with their homely comparisons so fitting the practical country-man narrating. Examples are numerous without disturbing the flow of the action:

> Sometimes the sun gets sick and does not come up out of his sea-bed with morning. Bilious, he must be, for heavy clouds spew out from where he rests, and rolls and rolls on Morant Bay. (33)

A number of rhythmic repetitions and local proverbs express old Johnny's nature and at the same time help tie the threads of memory together. In the first chapter, for instance, "restlessness" and "memory" are key words. We have "I am restless tonight," "This restlessness will no make me find my bed," "No sleep will come to me," "Restless memories are rising inside me." The singing beneath

his window has:

> a plaintiveness like a January nightingale winging through the Cuna Cuna Pass, and yet with deepness and richness like cloud robes wrapping the evening sun. (7)

The rhythms and imagery, while not the actual Jamaican dialect, are workable and effective approximations. They bring to mind Alan Paton's rendering of the Kikiyu dialect in the English of Cry the Beloved Country.

New Day then can be recommended to teachers of English literature from a sociological viewpoint as one recreation of the West Indian past and near-present struggles for nationhood as seen by West Indians and showing the positive role played by some creoles and mulattos in the area's political progress. It can also be strongly recommended for literary reasons. A comparison between the historical records and the story of the Campbells could spark fruitful dicussion on the effect of bias on reporting, or on the difference between factual data and imaginative recreations. Through vivid character portrayals, the use of the first person viewpoint, through the flashback technique, the use of irony and foreshadowing, and finally through graphic and sensuous imagery, several aspects of the novel, its form and style can be meaningfully explored.

John Hearne: Voices Under the Window

Among the eight West Indian novels recommended here for use in Alberta high schools, John Hearne's Voices Under the Window is the only one other than New Day which uses a specific historical event as the initial incident, the catalyst to pull the reader into the drama.

In this case the Kingston riot occurring it seems in the early fifties but not unlike those of nineteen thirty-eight in which Garth Campbell of New Day was injured, is the occasion. A confrontation at the Ministry of Labour escalates as the desperate, unemployed mob moves towards the city centre. Soon all of down-town Kingston takes to the streets in full-scale stone-throwing, knife-wielding, and later flame-throwing chaos.

Quite unaware of these developments, except for a strange foreboding as he moves through the malodorous slum yards, labour party leader Mark Lattimer with his friend Ted Burrows and his mistress Brysie Dean are making house-to-house visits of party faithfuls. In Coronation Lane the crowds bring the car to a standstill. The trio try walking calmly and actually struggle to a small clear patch of road. Mark Lattimer, however, moves to rescue a child who is being mauled, and as he tries to comfort the screaming youngster, an incensed rioter hissing "Put him down, you white bitch" swings his machete expertly, chopping Mark down from behind. With this as the dramatic opening, the reader's attention is rivetted and one is ready to share in Mark's life which flashes by him in scenes as he lies dying in the upstairs tenement room above a filthy sidewalk. The wild mobs outside make it impossible for Brysie and Ted to get through to a hospital, or for any communication with ambulance service. The one hope of rescue is through the woman who gave up her room to the wounded man and has hurrried off to report the tragedy at the police station about a mile away. Chances of help reaching Mark on time are slim as he himself realises in his moments of consciousness.

Beyond the dramatic tension set up as Brysie and Ted begin their vigil over Mark's lifeless form, the irony of the situation and keynote of the theme are set. Mark is a near-white member of the Jamaican elite. He has spent most of his life as a member of the privileged class with most of his associates being white. He has recently returned to the island bent at last on identifying with the underprivileged. His work with the union and his politics are evidence of that. So is his sincere attachment to Brysie, the black, though elegant and cultured school-teacher. His presence in the slum area that morning was to check on some of his party members "before they went to work or went off for the day looking for work." (12) Even his impulsive rush to help the fallen child makes it more pointedly ironical that he should be cut down as a white oppressor. As the enraged crowds surged forward, even those who recognized Matt looked with "black frozen anger" showing utter rejection of any advance he might make.

Who is to blame for this madness? Riots and mayhem are ugly and destructive but as Ted comments bitterly, "Perhaps when you've taken the beatings they've done for so long, this is the only way you can show you've still got a heart left." (15)

The complication of mindless association of all white or fair-skinned people with oppression is the result of the peculiar colonial structure in the West Indies and, in fact, becomes a kind of prophecy of the reverse discrimination which has been quite widespread in the island since independence. Matt's case is much like that of Cry the Beloved Country's humane white reformer who is murdered by the desperate and terrified burglar, Absolom. The theme is clear.

Suppressed by centuries of poverty and degradation, the under-privileged black masses will erupt like a volcano spreading havoc over those who seek social justice as well as over the true oppressors. The same theme is implied in the savage mob scenes of A Tale of Two Cities and in the prophecy in Cry the Beloved Country of such upheavals as the Mau Mau uprisings. Hearne presents the dilemma from the point of view of the middle-class reformer struck down by those he seeks to help. But there is no attack on the ingratitude of the masses. The help for the poor has come too late and from too few of the fair-skinned elite to eliminate built-up aggression in a wink. Nevertheless, there is the urgent plea that the steps taken towards righting the wrong done to the masses must continue. Although it means, as Mark says, "giving up everything that makes you a separate person", for "to do the work faithfully you have to kill a little of yourself every day, till it's only the work and your faith that's left." (60) This dedication to the people came late in Mark's life, long after his Czechoslovakian friend, Hancho, had surprised his hidden sensitivity with the question about his coloured heritage and what he planned to do about it. Indeed, in spite of some sterling qualities, his life, until his return to Jamaica eight years after he had left it, was a selfish, aimless drifting with the current. In his semi-conscious flashes we see the childhood in which his black heritage was almost obliterated. Reared as a master with no less than three servants at home, his confidence was first shaken when the gardener, Dan, patiently explained that he was not a white man. But his determination is also rooted in his childhood as we see in the three-month private training with the ponderous iron-pipe to make

himself fit to use his uncle's '22 B.S.A. His descriptions of people and things tell of his inner sensibilities. But the flashbacks also reveal a callousness that grows with his charm. His desertion of Margaret after their idyllic, garden-of-Eden love affair in British Columbia shows that, though even now the sense of guilt at his cruelty haunts him. His war record attests to his courage and there is no doubt that he was shattered by the death of his close friend David. Characteristic of his drifting, however, was the way he handled that grief. He tried to drown it in alcohol and visits to his favourite prostitute. His post-war marriage to Jean runs true to form. What starts out as an idyllic romance eventually falls apart when she can no longer stomach his easy slide into infidelity. The turning point in this malaise of uncommitted drifting comes when he finally exorcised his fear of his own invisible blackness. In a pub near the docks, when three English sailors approach him to complain about the Niggers who "stowaway" to Britain to "marry white women", "to sell rope, you know, Mary Jane", and "to pimp for their bloody dark girls" (136), Mark lashes out at the speaker proclaiming himself one of the Niggers. The two months he spends in hospital afterwards must have completed the exorcism for he was ready to work again and, for the first time, to be committed.

Now there is a sense of guilt, a feeling of waste in Mark as his past flashes by. How paradoxical that he remained fortune's minion through youth, air force training, the war, complacently accepting life's munificence including the love so many women freely gave to him, but that now, when he is wholly committed to his people and to

Brysie, when he wants more than ever to live and prove his sincerity, a chance blow should end it all!

Yet Mark sees the attack as a symbolic retribution. The black man in his drugged state was striking at the white enemy he had always hated just as somewhere inside himself he, Mark, had always subconsciously hated and feared the black. He has no illusions now about his own mulatto position. As representative of his class, he sees the black masses "bellowing to me to get off their necks, and the whites, too, screaming nervously, not so often,more refined, whenever I came nearer than a certain limit." (28)

The language is clear and economical but appealing sufficiently to the senses to create revolting as well as pleasant effects. For instance, in part one, the slum sights and odours are pronounced. Just outside of the car, Mark, Ted, and Brysie "stood there in the sun, blinking a little in the glare from the zinc roofs, with the gutter smell and the scent of rising hate around them and the stink of sweat from heated, badly nourished bodies." (16)

Faithfulness to detail recreates for us the room where the dying Mark finds shelter. The flashbacks stand out in sharp relief. Canadian students can be pleased with Mark's memory of the B.C. Rockies for it brings them to life without overdramatization. The dialogue is effective except for some, over-sentimental lines between Mark and Brysie. Indeed, the book would make a worthwhile addition to the high school English novels list for all the reasons given to recommend New Day though the two novels follow quite separate paths in treatment. One difference is the legend-making exuberance of the old pioneer's narration of New Day as opposed to the drier realism of

Mark's last coming to terms with truth. Another is that Mark's account is in standard English and so would present no dialect difficulties.

George Lamming: In the Castle of My Skin

Appearing as it does in discussion of every prevailing theme in Caribbean literature, George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin is an obvious choice for any group wishing to learn of the West Indian milieu and its major concerns. Indeed for that purpose it has recently been listed among the works now included in the Ontario school syllabus aimed, as William Doyle-Marshall (1983) reports, at integrating Black studies into their curricula. There can be no doubt that the novel, in its double focus on the narrator's development from childhood to manhood and the evolution of Creighton village from unequal but stable structure to dislocation after the estate sale, has captured essential elements of the individual and societal fabric in the West Indies. Through G's eyes the character of the village is seen. Its poverty is real; raindrops fall through the roofs; flimsy homes are washed away in the heavy rains. But the "hardy poor . . . slept peacefully beneath the flying spray." (15) There is built-in antagonism between the villagers and the black overseer who is supposed to be the mediator in communication with the white landlord in the big brick house on the hill but who fears lest any misdemeanors on the part of the "low-down nigger people" will jeopardise his position. This conviction that the poor at the foot of the social scale are responsible for the justified contempt of the white overlords for nonwhites is also held by government servants and local

professionals. Yet, even these class tensions help keep the social fabric in place. The school, with its nineteenth-century English routine complete with a head-teacher who rivals any Mr. Gradgrind without being pure stereotype, further underpins the structure. The account of Empire Day celebrations crystallizes the folk's acceptance of separation from their own roots. The older people reminisce:

> Three hundred years, more than the memory could hold, Big England had met and held Little England and Little England like a sensible child accepted . . . . Barbados or Little England was the oldest and purest of England's children . . . . One day before time changed to eternity, Little England and Big England, God's anointed on earth, might hand in hand rule this earth. (37)

The white inspector then stirs the loyal hearts of the gathering, reminding the students that "we are all subjects and partakers of that great design, the British Empire . . . that the British Empire has always worked for peace in the world . . . that this was the job assigned it by God." (38) Individual class inspections follow, and the traditional pennies are distributed, but, at this point in the proceedings, someone giggles loudly. The head teacher barely maintains his stoic calm until the inspector leaves. He then rages at the hooligans who grinned "like jackasses when respectable people" of "power and authority" were around. The innocent boy who starts forward after the headteacher threatened to "beat every blasted one from top to bottom" is stretched among four boys and strapped until his "knees tottered" and "the filth slithered down his legs." In the subsequent discussion among the boys, we learn that perhaps the merciless beating stemmed from the head teacher's embarrassment at being beaten by his wife.

In the anecdotes interspersed with G's musings, we follow the boys, with Trumper as leader, as they sneak into the grounds to watch the Great House dance. They stumble on the landlord's daughter in the grass with a sailor. There is an amusing account of the mad chase when an ant-nest betrays the boys' presence. Only by joining an open-air revival meeting and going up to give testimony and be saved do they manage to escape the pursuing guard.

We listen in on the boys' speculations on freedom and slavery when no books give them that information and the teacher assures them that there were never slaves in Little England. They talk about couples who after living happily together are torn apart by church weddings and they decide that marriage is not for everyone.

In the actual plot there are repercussions in the village from the waterfront strike. Some of the villagers as dock workers have withheld their services and the deliberations in front of the shoemaker's shop become more heated. The boys, who have crept into the city to see what the strike was all about, barely escape, and one woman loses her son in the melee. Crippled by the strike, Creighton sells the land to Slime and Company, headed by the crafty Slime who uses the villagers' penny-bank profits to finance his scheme. Everyone is shaken by the upheaval. Ma, the oldest woman of the village has already died. But Pa, her philosopher husband, is taken to the alms house. The boys' gang disintegrates: Bob and Boy Blue become police officers; Trumper goes to the United States; G, who since high school has been moving away from the gang, now prepares to leave Barbados for a teaching post in Trinidad. In spite of the pride

the village expresses at his success, G is overcome by "a sense of something lost."

Characterization shows a departure from the conventional novel but is none-the-less valid. The whole village is the main character. What we have is a mosaic type portrayal. G's mother, Bob's mother, Mrs. Foster, Mr. Foster, the shoemaker, the head-teacher, Slime, Ma and Pa, the overseer's brother, Bob, Trumper, Boy Blue, and Savory are all sketched with bold strokes which clearly distinguish them, but the composite is more important than each individual. Over all broods the sensitive nature of G who is much more than an artistic consciousness. He enjoys romping with the boys but is loath to awaken his mother's wrath. He is good humoured as the anecdotes reveal. Slight of build, he contrasts well with Boy Blue--big, tough and shiny-black. Even when we first meet G on his ninth birthday, he is searching for a past and dissatisfied with his mother's half answers. He is haunted by the phantoms that people his brain, that "danced and jeered through the thick black space of this narrow room." (14) In his high-school years he completely withdraws into his reading, in part to get away from his mother's constant railing.

Beyond any authentic picture of village life, its formative pressures and upheavals, the book is concerned with the growing-up process for the sensitive, searching individual within such an environment. The question which emerges is whether growing up must then mean growing away from. There are indeed deep symbolic overtones supporting this. The title <u>In the Castle of My Skin</u> is not merely restricted to racial connotations of "skin". This becomes clear when G talks of his fear of being known lest that knowledge leave him

vulnerable. For the time being he feels safe, guarding his identity. Indicating his growing personal isolation he declares: "The likenesses will meet and make merry, but they won't know you. They won't know the you that's hidden somewhere in the castle of your skin." (261)

The novelist experiments with a number of different writing styles. Lyric passages, allusive flashbacks, first person accounts, dialogue set out in the manner of a play-script, and third person narration are all juxtaposed. Yet the reader feels no irritation in these shifts for they suit the portrayal of the whole social self recreated. We get appropriately what Quested (1981) refers to as "the crab-like backwards and forwards style." (15)

Neither can the novel be judged as lacking because it has no tight development from exposition through initial conflict to climax and denouement any more than we should expect many-facetted characterization in the individuals other than G, for the emphasis is not on plot or individual characterization, but on theme for which as Stewart Hall (1955) notes, "the loose poetically organized framework of points of view" fits admirably and in his opinion this novel belongs to the genre of stream-of-consciousness. (175)

If the body of Lamming's work is perceived as the odyssey towards understanding the elements within the West Indian persona, then this novel makes the first hesitant steps where crab-like the protagonist attempts to shield his sensitive self as he ventures out.

Jean Rhys: Wide Sargasso Sea

Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea presents for the reader a

terrifyingly realistic view of the plight of the white creole heiresses of post-emancipation in the West Indies, providing thereby a much needed other side of the colonial dilemma in this literature of the West Indies by West Indians. It is much more than an imaginative extension of Charlotte Bronte's enigmatic cipher haunting Thornfield Hall with its blood-curdling screams, because Antoinette Cosway (named Bertha Mason after Rochester's disenchantment) lives and breathes completely in Wide Sargasso Sea, quite apart from the scant and horrifying appearances of Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre. But, in addition to these engaging characteristics, the novel in its first person accounts of both leading figures, uncovers a chilling tale of young people caught in the tangles of their social milieu which breeds suspicion, manipulates them, and chokes all their natural and instinctive impulses. The theme at once expresses the tragic deforming legacy of slavery upon the creoles held in contempt by whites and blacks. But it also deals with the personal tragedy of total alienation, with the victim role of the nineteenth century female, and the question of trust in an unfriendly, rumour-ridden world. And all these concerns are as important to Canadian youth today as to West Indians.

Rhys' psychological insights are astounding. Antoinette's account of her childhood and adolescence is in keeping with what Francis Wyndham in his introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel calls "that mixture of quivering immediacy and glassy objectivity that is among her [Rhys'] most extraordinary distinctions." (6) The child's bewildering confusion and fear of people grow in the desolation at Coulibri after her father's death.

Her mother, the beautiful, fun-loving Annette, is too bitter about her own abandonment, especially after her one sympathetic neighbour kills himself and the exslaves poison her horse, to pay any attention to the desolate girl. The Martinique maid, Christophine, provides some comfort with her patois songs, and she brings black Tia to play, but there is something frightening about the coal-black Christophine whose obeah practices induce the unwilling villagers to bring gifts and do some menial chores. These fears and snatches of superstition create a nightmare world for the lonely child. For a while playing with Tia is a joy, but at their first quarrel Tia taunts her as "white nigger", as "whitey cockroach", and runs off with Antoinette's dress. Her mother's sudden marriage to Mr. Mason brings temporary relief from her gloom, but her ingrained fear of people often leads her in these months to choose deserted tracks where razor-sharp grass cut her legs and arms, where "black ants, or red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked her to the skin even the snake she saw once were all better than people." (24) Antoinette's fears are justified by almost every experience which follows. Soon the blacks, grown envious of their new prosperity with Mason as master, become more threatening. His decision to import indentured East Indians is the spark to their smouldering hate. The account of the Coulibri fire from the viewpoint of the bewildered child, for whom the sights and sounds of her nightmare blend phantasmagorically with the smoke and flames, the lifeless form of her invalid brother, the smell of burning hair and her mother's screams and moans, has an evocative brilliance which never once descends into sentimentality. The pitiable group only escapes the machete and rocks of enraged Negroes when Annette's

parrot, ablaze and falling from the balcony to its death, terrifies the crowd as a sign of bad luck. Most poignant is Antoinette's flight toward Tia, an effort to remain with someone whom she can associate with the now devastated Coulibri. The simplicity of the account at this point heightens the pathos.

> As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass. (38)

Aunt Cora and the Convent School in Spanish Town provide some refuge in Antoinette's disintegrating life in her adolescent years, during which time her mother, now a screaming maniac, provides more taunts with which the town's people abuse her. But her stepfather has plans for her "coming out", for her mixing with society. He even hints that visitors from England will keep her from being dull. How could he know the terror that stalks her at the mere mention of life outside or the visions of hell that haunt her dreams?

Further developments in this tragic portrait of Antoinette come in the records of her husband, Rochester, chosen for her by the Masons, who surrendered all the girl's inheritance in exchange for his willingness to be protector. Frightened, sullen at first, even flatly refusing to go through with the ceremony right before the wedding, Antoinette is eventually won by a greater gentleness than she has ever known and by her husband's obvious desire for her physically. In the first weeks of their honeymoon on her special island, she opens like a

flower. She learns to laugh, to be willing to share her fantasies with this protector who promised to keep her safe, who made her no longer wish to die. Quivering so with this new joy, like the many dancing moths they watch flocking to the candleflames, she is unable to comprehend his cold rejection after the arrival of Daniel's vicious letter which informs him that his wife is the half-crazed inheritor of madness from both sides of her family. Yet she achieves a kind heroic stature as she struggles for sanity in her defence of herself and her family, knowing that the slanders have already poisoned her husband's mind. She is willing to accept him even after his brutal possession of her on that night of revelations. But nothing matters after she spends a night listening to his love play with the maid, Emelie, in the room next to hers. Upon her return after some days with Christophine, we get the first glimpse of the raving lunatic of Thornfield Hall. Afraid of the effects of the sleeping potion, Christophine switched to giving the distraught girl rum to alleviate her mental agony, but it aroused a savagery in her. Barefoot, her hair dishevelled, she now shouts to Baptiste for more rum. When Rochester attempts to calm her, she flies at him with abuses and obscenities and bites him till the blood flows. These actions only confirm for Rochester the wicked slander of Daniel that she is the mad daughter of mad parents. As Francis Wyndham declares, "the action narrows as inexorable as Greek tragedy, towards the attic in Thornfield Hall, the grim Grace Poole and the suicidal holocaust of leaping flames." (Penguin ed. Book jacket) In the last short stream of-consciousness method-in-madness outpourings, we get the final wild

flutter of this caged bird, for whom the orchid, the parrot Caro, and so many past fading flowers of her tropical land become symbolic.

Rochester's character, though drawn with fewer details, is also plausible and complex. By Mrs. Eff's account to Grace Poole, Rochester is certainly no devil, for as a boy "he was gentle, generous, brave. His stay in the West Indies has changed him out of all knowledge." (145) He is bitter that as a second son he must be married off to some creole heiress to secure for himself an inheritance and leave the family estate intact for his older brother. He has barely met the girl, and she has hardly said a word to him though they have danced together and he has noticed her beauty in spite of her sad, frightened eyes which looked right through him. The whole steaming tropical luxuriance is disconcerting. The growth is too lush, the colours too brilliant, the natives truculent, staring blankly or running away in fright. Yet he had begun to find his bride attractive, her whimsical stories appealing. His uneasiness was disappearing under the soporific influence of the Dominican atmosphere when the revelations of Daniel Cosway's letter showed him that he was chained to a hopeless lunatic in exchange for her wealth. He was unable to grasp Daniel's duplicity. Like Mr. Mason he was too unschooled in the depths of hate dwelling in many of the mulattos and Negroes. He could see no gain for which Daniel would fabricate such lies. How could he believe Antoinette's explanations and protests against Daniel's lies? Even her stories about the fire at Coulibri now seem part of her fanciful imaginings. Now he begins to see meaning in the odd glances from the people in Jamaica, in Emelie's brash manner and her being "sorry for him". Antoinette's whispers in

the dark take on new significance. "I never wished to live before I knew you. I always thought it would be better if I died." (76) "If I could die. Now, when I am happy . . . say die and I will die." (76) In his own way, a little sadistically, he would watch her die in the throes of their love-making. Though he feels cheated of his whole manhood by the callous family bargain, he does not glorify his own actions.

> As for the happiness I gave her, that was worse than nothing. I did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did. (78)

This he records before the arrival of the fatal letter. In spite of this and the horror of the letter's accusations, there seems to have been enough generosity of spirit in Rochester for him to salvage something from their relationship had he not become convinced that she was trying with Christophine's necromancy to poison him. His spiteful reaction, his turning to the maid, Emelie, pushes Antoinette's quivering spirit over the brink. Ironically, the raving Antoinette sees far more about the human heart than her embittered husband. For he is too sorry for himself to see the part he has played, by this final rejection, in crumpling the fragile human spirit which like the moth has fluttered to the warmth he promised. He sees the besotted lunacy he expected and in his own drunkeness forgets the delicate responsiveness he has awakened.

The background characters are life-like and intriguing with the right amount of mystery. They are not just stereotypes. Pathetic Annette Cosway who loved to dance and was too distracted by her own

plight and concern for "poor Pierre" to give attention to Antoinette; Christophine, the tender nurse crooning to Annette and now to "dou-dou Antoinette" yet terrifying the villagers with her threats of obeah; Aunt Cora, the English creole but without the bigotry of so many of her countrymen; even Tia, the black playmate who stole Antoinette's dress, cheated her of her shiny pennies and struck her with the rock but cried when she watched her bleeding; or Grace Poole concerned for the poor shivering thing in spite of her miserly money-grubbing and her frequent gin drunks--all are real-life people caught in the dance macabre where there is much shout and lamentation but no meaningful communication.

The three-part structure of the story is a perfect medium to disclose the consciousness of the two main characters. In each section the control or lack of control of the phrasing parallels the state of mind of the narrator. The overall effect is poetic, allusive, shattering, illustrating well what Wyndham terms Rhys' "passion for stating the case of the underdog" and her "singular instinct for form". (5)

Both In the Castle of My Skin and Wide Sargasso Sea are admirably suited to Canadian high school study. Portraying the complex West Indian environment from vastly different points of view they give the students a balanced picture of that world. In addition, by dealing with the problem of growing up and feeling alienated, or building shells to protect our vulnerabilities, the novels should certainly awaken responses among our own often troubled teenagers. The novels would fit comfortably into theme units (often studied in our high schools) on education and isolation. Both novels present

exciting stylistic devices such as the stream-of-consciousness technique and afford fine examples for the study of the relation between point of view and tone. Moreover, Wide Sargasso Sea, by using a previous literary work as jumping-off point, could inspire young writers to try the same type of extension from other works of literature.

Samuel Selvon: A Brighter Sun

In his assessment of Samuel Selvon's A Brighter Sun, L.E. Braithwaite (1960) declares:

> As an unfolding narrative; for insight into the human condition; and as a description of man's soul seeking truth, and fulfillment, it can certainly hold its own at any level or in any company of contemporary writing. Selvon, above all West Indian writers, appears to be able to see each person's life as a completed world: all actions taking their place in that world. No thought, no action, is irrelevant. And when two or more people come together, their separate worlds touch and interlink into a larger, more complex community. (208)

These characteristics and the fact that the novel displays another section of the complex multi-racial milieu of the West Indies have influenced my selection of A Brighter Sun as being a worthwhile book for secondary students to study. The setting is the poor mangrove swamps of Barataria, Tinidad, where strips of land were traditionally leased to residents but where during World War II a road had to be built to connect the American Base in Chaguanas with the capital Port of Spain. The action begins with the arranged wedding between the young East Indians, Tiger and Urmilla, and their move to the tiny holding in Barataria which is part of their dowry. With no experience besides cane-planting and playing with the neighbour lads in

Chaguanas, but obsessed with the desire to be his own man, Tiger achieves much. He plants a garden and begins milk sales. With the old Indian Sookdeo as mentor, he learns to read and write. Despite inbred prejudices, Tiger and Urmilla make friends with the Negro neighbours, Rita and Joe. When the American road construction starts, the now literate Tiger is soon promoted to time-keeping and assisting with the surveying equipment. This prosperity is not, however, without side-effects. Sookdeo's garden is appropriated and he barely manages to retrieve his buried money before the bulldozers move in. Sookdeo is lost and, soon after, he dies suddenly. Tiger's fortunes have been rising though, and he has been on such good terms with his American supervisors that he expansively invites them to dinner. In a panic, Urmilla scrubs the clay-floored hut to a glistening shine, furnishes it with items borrowed from Rita who helps her to look the hostess complete with make-up. The occasion is a success and Tiger receives many compliments from his bosses, but his anger smoulders at the many unauthorised changes that Urmilla has made. In drunken rage after the guests leave, he beats and kicks his pregnant wife. He is overcome with remorse when she becomes ill. After scouring Port-of-Spain at night for a doctor, he manages to get a white physician to see her. The doctor prescribes complete bed-rest and recommends that an obstetrician or certified midwife be obtained for the delivery. But neither is available at Urmilla's confinement and Rita's best efforts cannot save the still-born son. Tiger is distraught, torn between remorse and the urge to blame Rita for the tragedy. Tension between the neighbours only subsides when Tiger

starts building his house on the site of his hut after he has sent Urnilla for a rest in Chaguanas.

The drive towards proving his manhood continues to possess him. It leads him at times to be cruel, boastful, and miserly. But his chauvinism is mellowed by his open disposition and an honest desire to find out things. His ability to analyse situations, to question established mores, leads him to real friendships that cross racial lines and gives him the strength to cope with real sorrow from which he gains greater understanding of himself and more appreciation for Urmilla.

On a less dramatic scale Urmilla is also a developing character. She evolves from the shy, simple young bride, who cried herself to sleep on that first lonely night in Barataria, into a capable help-meet, a good cook and hard worker. She, even more than Tiger, has crossed racial boundaries. When her mother and in-laws show horror at their friendship with Rita and Joe, she insists, "But mai, these people good to us; we is friends. I does get little things from she, and sometimes she does borrow little things from me. They is not bad people." (47) She is patient, never blaming Tiger, though she is always fearful of his irritable moods. She knows "that Indian women just kept the house and saw after the children and didn't worry their men" (49) but she wants to talk and laugh and share worries with Tiger. Basically cast in the female victim mould, she shows signs of breaking out of it. When we meet her in the sequel Turn Again Tiger her development is almost complete.

Rita, full of earthy common sense, is an indispensable anchor for the less stable Joe, and a genuine friend who bears no grudges.

She insists on lending Urmilla a proper bed for her deliveries and officiates as midwife at the births. Unlike many Negroes who spurn the local East Indian "coolies", she rises above such prejudices.

Sure, clear characterization persists in the portrayals of Rita's city-boy, common-law husband, Joe; the friendly, accommodating Chinese grocer, Tall-boy; the old drunk Sookdeo whose green thumb secret was planting at the full-moon.

The narrative is omnisciently told though the most searching internal views are of Tiger's consciousness. Structurally the chapters alternate between the personal lives of the poor Barataria gardeners and head-line news of current events in Trinidad and the world during the second world war. The result is then, as Stuart Hall (1955) suggests, that the dramatic tension "consists in the juxtaposition of the world of fact on Tiger's world". (177) Only ocassionally does the outside world impinge on Tiger's (the construction of the road to the American base is the obvious one) but through his urge to make sense of his life, Tiger's environment becomes a world. It is not a world he has mastered for he is still rash, and sometimes he falls back on irrational acts, but as he questions and seeks to make amends, he is progressing as a thoroughly human character.

The narrative presents no problems for non-West Indians as it is standard English. The dialogue is in dialect which catches the rhythm and vitality of the West Indian oral language in the same way that the dialogue of Hardy's Wessex peasants caught the language of the area.

Thematically the novel should have immediate appeal among high school students. The implication that growing up is far more

complicated than aping the blustering actions of our elders is meaningful in any part of the world. What Tiger and Urmilla learn about themselves, and what they experience about real friendship outside of their traditional racial codes could well become models for our own troubled mosaic. Furthermore, the lively dramatization of the characters and the truly comic incidents as well as the poignant scenes promise a fulfilling experience to teacher and students alike.

Merle Hodge: Crick Crack Monkey

In Crick Crack Monkey, Merle Hodge through the pure vision of her child narrator has captured, with its numerous ramifications, the twin worlds of vibrant, vulgar folk-life and the middle-class status seeking struggles in the Trinidad "mish-mash" of races and cultures. The poverty, the hardships, the irrepressible outbursts of anger, affection, laughter and tears of the characters surrounding Tantie Rosa, come to us three-dimensionally as the narrator in retrospect allows the naive and sensitive child to project her own innocent uncensoring view.

The story itself has no lurid sensational occurrences. Cynthia and Codrington, lovingly called Tee and Toddan at Tantie Rosa's, lose their mother, who dies in childbirth. Their father's sister, the raucous Tantie Rosa, who has already raised Mikey, a young man in his mid-teens, gathers the two children joyously to her bosom. They adore life with Tantie and Mikey; they feel no qualms about accepting the many "uncles" who often visit Tantie. Mr. Henry, little Doolarie, the drunken Mr. Christopher being dragged home from his weekly binge, the forbidden company of Mikey's gang on the bridge, form a comfortable

extended family where the children feel at home. But upon her sister's death, their snobbish middle-class aunt, Beatrice McNeil, insists on having the children. Her efforts are stalled however, while their father Selwyn remains in Santa Clara, and her brief and stormy custody of them after Selwyn's departure abroad is cut short by his written statement naming Rosa their guardian in his absence.

Back with Tantie's blustering tantrums and Mikey's constant games there is excitement and the awareness of protection and love. The reader experiences with Tee the ecstatic summer holidays at Pointe d'Espoir with Ma, their paternal grandmother. There all the grandchildren and godchildren gather in riotous dishabille; romp through the bush or frolic in the sea under Ma's watchful eye; form rival gangs or huddle together playing tent in the four-poster during rainstorms; they scramble for mouth-watering goodies which Ma distributes or they listen goggle-eyed to her "anancy" stories (African derivatives with a spider hero) when the moon is up. The reader follows Tee's kindergarten days at Mrs. Hinds' where any learning was mere accident of Mr. Hinds' rote teaching of devotion to the "Mother Country", his outrage at the stupidity of the "nincompoops" in his charge, and the gossip sessions between the heavy-reared Mrs. Hinds and her hard-of-hearing mother. Later comes priceless highlights of experiences at Santa Clara elementary school, dominated by the tyrant, Sir of grade three. Armed with a versatile whip and a powerful roar, Sir laboured to instill writing skills, memory training, good discipline and absolute unquestioning obedience in his khaki-clad often barefooted throng. The comic incidents

provoke laughter, but the stifling deculturation of the schoolroom is vividly exposed without the bitterness of diatribe.

Then, after months of drilling in the exhibition class, Tee wins one of the prized high school scholarships, and the radical change Tantie had fought for six years to avoid comes about with hardly a murmur from her. Who else but Aunt Beatrice would provide a home for Tee, now properly called Cynthia, near to her new high school in the city?

And what a story of alienation and bewildering confusion follows! Caught between the ridicule of her young cousins, Carol and Jessica, the indifference of the oldest, Bernadette, and Uncle Norman, the sugary sweetness of Aunt Beatrice, and the sarcastic reproaches of the high school teacher, Cynthia is truly a lost little girl. Aunt Beatrice embarks on a long-suffering mission to polish away the crudities absorbed through Cynthia's life with Rosa. Gone are the spontaneous laughter, the boisterous games of the Santa Clara days. The pampered McNeil girls fight viciously among themselves, yell at their mother disrespectfully, and pay no attention to their father, who seems little more than a figurehead withdrawing to the safety of his bedroom. In this setting Cynthia recoils from Beatrice's over-sweet attentions and from her continual complaints about her own family's ingratitude or the injustice of Rosa's turning her sister's children into hooligans.

Although Beatrice had promised to send Cynthia to spend some weekends and certainly the holidays with Tantie Rosa, not once does this materialize. At first Cynthia is afraid to ask about returning for Moonie Ramlaal's wedding, and later she becomes too painfully

conscious of all the low-class characteristics of her past associations to want to face them. The climax comes when, almost without notice, Tantie, Toddan, Doolaria and "Uncle'" Sylvester come to visit, bringing greasy paper bags of East Indian goodies made especially for Tee by Ramlaal's wife. Cynthia sits awkwardly on the edge of her chair worrying about their desecrating Aunt Beatrice's drawing room with their "coolie food" and "salt-fish." Tantie's abrupt decision to leave forestalls further mortification. Yet, as they disappear she has a "fleeting urge to call them back." Just when Cynthia's loneliness and self-hate become unbearably acute, a summons comes from their father that both the children should be sent to England. The agony at Aunt Beatrice's ends, for as a prospective traveller to England Cynthia suddenly gains social status in the eyes of Aunt Beatrice and all her associates. But Cynthia's growing contempt for Tantie Rosa and the nagging feeling of guilt she experiences with that contempt removes her earlier joie de vivre.

The characters in this novel simply explode with their vitality. Tee herself is round and dynamic. During her years with Tantie Rosa she is quick witted, observant, with a bit of the devil in her when she sneaks out to be with Mikey and his rowdy friends, plays tricks on the school watchman, or joins the gang stealing tamarinds from Mr. Brathwaite's estate. She is protective of her little brother and staunchly loyal to Tantie, courageous even when confronted with Mr. Brathwaite himself whom she has been led to believe was some evil ghost. She is imaginative, creating for herself a fancy second character, Helen, who has great adventures in the snow and has tea and scones at four o'clock. She is tough too, attacking Carol and Jessica

and accepting several of Sir's lashes dry-eyed and unflinching. And yet the change to the shy, brooding, gauche Cynthia, who even contemplates suicide is quite consistent in light of her radically changed circumstances. Desolate, more and more convinced of her own unworthiness, the 'ordinaryness" and "niggeryness" of her habits, she muses:

> At times I resented Tantie bitterly for not having let Auntie Beatrice get us in the first place and bring us up properly. What Auntie Beatrice said so often was quite true: how could a woman with no sense of right and wrong take it upon herself to bring up children, God new the reason why He hadn't given her any of her own. And I was ashamed and distressed to find myself thinking of Tantie in this way. (140)

Sometimes she had dreams of being at Pointe d'Espoir with Ma and all the children but immediately she remembered that Ma was a market vendor and realized how horrified Aunt Beatrice would be if she knew. When, after Tantie's embarrassing visit, she thought of running away to Santa Clara, these visions ended with her reaching Tantie's house. She no longer belonged. When, in preparation for the journey to England, she finally visited Tantie, there was more guilt and discomfort, for Ma had recently died calling for her "dou-dou Tee" who wasn't even aware she was ill.

Tantie Rosa is a true Rabelaisian character, laughing uproariously or bellowing abuses, but with a heart big enough to mother all the children of Santa Clara. True, the various "uncles" who visited helped her to pay the bills, and she enjoyed the occasional drinking sessions, but she would "murder" Mikey if she found out he had Tee in the company of his crude friends on the

bridge. She hated the hypocrisy of Beatrice's world and did not apologise for her own lifestyle.

Aunt Beatrice is first described, in the confusing hours after the death of Tee's mother, as somebody saying firmly "in a voice like highheels and stockings 'we will take the children.'" (9) She is a fair-skinned mulatto, struggling to live up to the "sacred" image of her white ancestor whose picture dominates the drawing-room. She has the greatest contempt for blacks and East Indians whom she calls "coolies." She talks much about Rosa's loose living but her true objection is to the black associations. In her own family she spoils Carol, who is the fairest, and nags Jessica to show some ambition as she does not have colour in her favour. Her children must only consort with the "best" families and she even puts up dark curtains to shield them from the ordinary folk next door. The result is that the girls abandon her and go off with their society friends. Her husband has long since stopped listening to her and even the servant treats her with disdain. More reprehensible is the way she manipulates Cynthia, smothering her with syrupy affection at first and then switching to icy sarcasm when she feels the child's instinctive rejection.

The minor characters, though caricatures, are sharply drawn. The teachers fit into that category as do the maid, Mrs. Harper, and the three McNeil girls. Unforgettable is Mr. Oliver, the diligent watchman of Santa Clara Elementary School.

> His movements slowed to a slouch. He had an air of dilapidatedness. An untidy growth of grey stunted weeds had overrun an area of his face. One of his eyebrows was in a permanent raised position, like a disparaging question

> mark as to the validity of anything whatsoever, while his eyes were never more than half open, as if he would shut out as much as possible of the disgusting spectacle which the world presented. His mouth was stretched into a sneer which was as often as not frothy at the corners. Older children said that Mr. Oliver had been known to smile, when his daughter and grandchild visted him, but we seriously doubted the existence of these personages. (71)

This description of Mr. Oliver indicates as well the gentle humour of the first section of the story. Tantie's company, for instance, was "loud and hilarious" and "the intermittent squawk and flurry" made Tee think of the fowlrun when something fell in the midst of the fat hens." (11)

The chapter recounting the summer with Ma has a lyrical quality in its celebration of youthful joy and innocence reminiscent of "Fern Hill." There Tee tells of the rain "drumming on the galvanize [zinc roof] and surrounding them with the heavy purring like a huge mother cat." (30) After the rain, as Ma watches the rising river, the children stand around her

> in an unlikely silence like spattered acolites in our jumble sale clothes, in the bright air hanging out crisp and taut to dry, and the river ploughing off with the dirt and everything drenched and bowing and satisfied and resting before the world started up again from the beginning (31).

Later they would "roam the yard and swarm down to the water and play hoop around the breadfruit tree as if we would always be wiry-limbed children whose darting about the sun would capture like amber and fix into eternity." (31)

The theme, that prejudice and snobbery are environmental conditionings vivified in this complex class-race-culture-struggle

with its tragic legacy of guilt and low self-esteem, should be vitally engaging for North American high school students in their own culturally mixed society. Study of the effects of cultural uprooting in this far off community should spark analysis of the possible disorientation that can follow similar shifts in our world.

Roger Mais: Brother Man

In less than two hundred pages, Roger Mais' Brother Man captures the interwoven lives of six individuals against the slum background of a Kingston lane leading down to the waterfront in the early 1950's. Unlike In the Castle of My Skin, this is a particularly urban setting without the props of the old estate structure or the school system as a frame of reference. The crowds here have more in common with those in Hearne's Voices Under the Window, Paterson's The Children of Sisyphus or Mais' earlier The Hills Were Joyful Together, where most of the characters, being unemployed, must live by their wits and search out forces beyond their mean lives to provide the strength for their survival struggle.

There is Girlie, young and attractive, consumed with a passionate love for Papacita. She is inordinately jealous and can only work out her problems on a physical level. From her first appearance, as she mechanically turns the magazine pages "the Kodak color picture trembling a little between her fingers" while Papacita tries to explain that he was not out with another woman, she is near explosion. When finally Papacita goes through with his threat to "pack up and quit," we expect some desperate action from her. Her whole life becomes meaningless without him, though they fought like

savage beasts when together. Eventually Girlie traces Papacita to his new lodgings where, emboldened by liquor, she waits for him, stabs him and with almost inhuman calm, turns herself in to the police.

Papacita himself is a "sweet boy," lazy, selfish, bumming cigarettes, living off Girlie but eyeing the other good-looking girls. He is getting tired of Girlie's jealousies but he is unable to resist the elemental physical attraction between them. He does leave her when he realizes how close he came to killing her in one of their battles, in spite of the sheer ecstasy she could bring him as when her warm contralto voice rang out amazingly at the Rockney Club that night. Papacita has the cunning of the jungle animal and a kind of daring which helps him to challenge the vice squad of the C.I.D. after his partner, Fellows, warns him that the police are on to their counterfeit racket. Yet he is painfully superstitious, reading signs in the moth which flies on his head, and the mirror which he accidentally shatters. More disastrous for him is his underestimation of Girlie's irrational rage, but his callous treatment, especially of Brother Man, makes his death a kind of retributive justice. He felt no remorse that Brother Man was jailed through his frame and he didn't even feel compunction when he was thanked by the healer for arranging bail. Papacita is one of those distorted growths of the slum world, with some charm, some occasional deep feeling, but dedicated to the satisfaction of his own urges.

In another house, really a two-room shack, live the sisters, Cordelia and Jesmina. Cordelia has not been herself since her husband has been sentenced to six years imprisonment for ganga trafficking. Tended by her young sister Jesmina, she recovers from fever but falls

into a brooding melancholy when her infant son fails to get well, even after Brother Man gives her money to buy the nourishment recommended by the doctor. Plagued by superstitions, she interprets every accidental action as an omen, and she turns away from Brother Man when he fails to cure the child instantly. Instead, she gives the money she receives from Brother Man to Brother Ambo the obeah man, to cure the child. She becomes so paranoid that she locks in her sister to ensure that she will always have her company. The need for more money to pay the obeah man leads her to join Papacita's plot to frame Brother Man with counterfeit coins. Her final acts are the result of her worsening psychotic condition. As she looks on her feverish son, she sees in place of his face the eyes of an evil owl. She presses the child to her bosom, rocks it, sings to it crazily, so that she barely recognizes that she has squeezed it to death. Then, unable to dispel images of pursuers in the form of Jesmina, Brother Man, and Brother Ambo, she deviously makes a rope and noose with strips of sheeting, and hangs herself. The image of her smothering the baby brings to mind the uncanny and pathetic end of Sinclair Ross' Canadian short story, The Lamp at Noon.

The reader is also drawn to the realistic characterization of Jesmina, young, finding for the first time some satisfaction in her friendship with Shine, the musician, but distracted by her concern for the increasingly strange behaviour of Cordelia. Brother Man and Minette have been her refuge in every distress, but such is her confusion that only after Brother Man's arrest does she connect Cordelia's meetings with Papacita and the counterfeit coins in Cordelia's money tin with a treacherous framing of the kindly Brother

Man. But then it is too late for restitution for Cordelia has hanged herself and Papacita has been killed by Girlie.

Minette is the other important female in this naturalistic frieze. She has been rescued by Brother Man when, starving after her flight into the city, she had gravitated to prostitution. She adores the quiet healer but becomes impatient at his ascetic spirituality. She is flattered by Papacita's attentions, but once Brother Man returns her love, there is no indication that she will be unfaithful.

A strong influence on all these lives, and on hundreds of others, is John Power, lovingly called Brother Man. This is Mais' romantic ideal of the Rastafarian hero, a far departure from the image of the Rastafarian brethren held at the time by the general public. In fact, this character is so unblemished that it strains credibility. The only quality that even approaches a flaw is his ingenuous nature through which he can be manipulated. He takes his love of God's creatures to extremes. He is an efficient cobbler, one of the few workers in the lane, but he shares his earnings with all who need it. He buys a crab from a boy only to set it free. He stands agonized over the broken body of a bird which he could not save from death. Through the treachery of his first love, he served a prison term in his youth and this experience makes him over-cautious about surrendering himself to Minette. As the drama progresses, with his healing and sage counselling of his neighbours, and his frequent communings with the sea, the Christ parallels build climaxing with the planting of the counterfeit money, his unjust arrest and the brutal attack on him by the crowd incensed against all Rastafarians because of the news of a murder-rape by a bearded man on the Palisadoes Road.

There is also a sense of opposition between good and evil in the actions of Brother Man and Brother Ambo, the obeah man; the one whose whole being is dedicated to the Christian "Peace and Love" ideal of his Rasta greeting, the other professing to have power through the agents of darkness.

In the social order these characters are all losers. Their lives are all dispensable, but the vitality of their protrayal arrests our attention in the same way that modern drama does. For, as Linda Loman of Death of a Salesman insists, a terrible thing is happening and attention must be paid to such persons because they are human beings.

Equally important in this novel is the special blending of structure and style or language. L. E. Braithwaite (1967) in his article "Jazz and the West Indian Novel" outlines the intricate rhythms that become the structural framework. At the beginning of each of the three main sections, there is a chorus, a description of the background folks like an ensemble of instruments given in standard English interspersed with groups of one liners in the dialect from the individuals within the chorus. Each section then interweaves, through omniscient narration in standard English and vibrant dialogue in the dialect, the lives of the major characters. As Braithwaite (1954) further demonstrates in his introduction to the Caribbean Writers Series edition of the novel (XV-XVI), each section can be scored as complete jazz orchestration from ensemble, to various duos and solos, like the special improvisations given to different instruments featured in the rendition, like variants on a jazz motif. The effect is powerful and represents as well through the variety of diction,

pitch, and pace of the different short units, the various levels of language spoken in Jamaica.

Samuel Selvon: The Lonely Londoners

The final selection is Samuel Selvon's The Lonely Londoners, representing effectively the immigrant experience of so many of the West Indian poor who flocked to the "Mother Country" in the mid twentieth century in search of the better life. What we gather as their lives unfold episodically, filtered through the sardonic humour of Moses Aloetta, is that the problems of survival for most are so urgent, the whole environment so strange, cold, and unwelcoming, that the "tests" huddle together, laughing slap-happily to keep from facing their unfortunate plight.

Moses is himself high priest, unofficial liaison of the incoming hordes. He is the experienced oldtimer, having lived in Bayswater for a number of years, and being therefore knowledgeable about possible housing vacancies and job opportunities. He hates to get out of bed to go wandering about in the London fog, yet when we first meet him he is, as on many other occasions, on his way to Waterloo Station to meet a Trinidadian whose only connection with him is through a mutual friend in Trinidad. Though he feels he is being used, memories of his own lost state when he first arrived in Britain make it impossible for him to deny assistance to any newcomers. On Sundays his flat "in the water" becomes the meeting place for all the West Indian "boys" who can temporarily forget the week's miseries by laughing over old times back home.

Though they all share much the same hardships, there are clearly defined individuals in this uprooted crew.

There is Tolroy, the Jamaican who out of his five pounds a week wage has managed to send for his mother, but is aghast to see four other members of his extended family arrive with her. Though Tolroy is distressed and embarrassed by the invasion, he is easy-going enough to adapt, especially after he finds new quarters and his mother finds employment as a dishwasher while Tanty Bessy takes over the housekeeping. Tanty is one of those truly comic folk characters in West Indian fiction. She simply disarms all opposition with her boisterous energy, her frankness and her generosity. Cast in the same mould as Tantie Rosa of Crick Crack Monkey, she makes her presence felt from the moment she steps off the train at Waterloo Station. She takes over the interview with the Echo reporter and hustles the whole family together to have their picture taken for the newspaper. She does not seem to be the least bit disconcerted by problems of adjustment. She makes friends with everyone, and, with her exuberance, helps to keep the group sane.

Then there is Henry Oliver, alias Sir Galahad, the new arrival from Trinidad who is all dressed up in a light tropical suit and a pair of "watchekongs" (running shoes) with "no overcoat or muffler or gloves or anything for the cold," and who keeps amazingly warm in freezing weather but begins to feel the cold in the summer. Sir Galahad, so called because of his amorous inclinations, in his effort to appear independent and sophisticated, would at first become hopelessly lost and confused even about directions. On his first day out, though he insisted he did not need help, it was only Moses'

fortunate appearance that enabled him to locate the employment exchange. Sir Galahad soon learns that although he was an electrician in Trinidad, he must do any kinds of labouring job available if he is to eat and find necessary shelter in London. Through his first year in Britain Sir Galahad takes the country by storm. Lucky enough to get a well-paying job, he buys himself the most fashionable clothes, takes out numerous "crafts," and glories in being able to walk in and identify all the places he had seen in romantic films. He absolutely refuses to be dismayed even by obvious signs of prejudice. His manner in all these circumstances is lordly and a little patronising. Sir Galahad manages to maintain his high spirits even when he has lost his job and starvation threatens. One cannot help laughing at the scene in Kensington Gardens when the hungry Sir Galahad, dressed in high fashion no doubt, grabs a pigeon for dinner and barely escapes the frantic screams of some dowager who rushes to get a policeman to jail him as a "monstrous killer."

Another unforgettable person is Cap, the African who came to London to study law, but who so squandered his money on women and high living that his father cut off support. Cap then, with only the most brief sallies into the ugly work world, lives by his wits, his gentle well-bred voice and his lady-killer charm. He is always moving house because he gets rent credited on the promise of payment when his fictitious allowance arrives. He has managed to secure meals from every acquaintance. With his law studies abruptly ended, Cap cannot bring himself to join the black manual labouring class, yet to his women he gives the impression that he works. There is, for instance, the time when he was living with an Austrian girl for whom he kept up

the pretence of working by leaving each day, taking the tube to Nottinghill Gate, only to make contact with other women. Under all this bravado is the harsh reality of hunger and cold. One remembers the tragic-comic incident with the hungry Cap deperately trying to trap seagulls as they perch on the roof and landing outside his high-rise apartment.

Harris is the social climbing phoney of the group. He seems to have "made it" in the "Mother Country" but he is brought to size by Tanty Bessy's exuberant greeting at the dance.

> "But look how big the boy get!" Tanty bawl. "I didn't believe Tolroy when he tell me. . . . I tell Tolroy: Nat little Harris what used to run about the barrack yard in shirttail!" (132)

On the other hand, there is poor Bart who falls in love with an English girl but is chased away when she takes him home to meet her parents. He now spends all his time trying to find her.

Lewis, Tolroy's brother-in-law, is another problem case. He is so gullible that he cannot trust his wife at home at nights while he works because he has heard that in England the wives left at home entertain other men. He takes to beating poor Gladys for her alleged infidelity until she leaves him for good.

In this novel Selvon works on a large canvas, with just enough detail for each figure to breathe life into the composite. Humour pervades the scenes. Yet the novel has much to say about racial prejudice, hypocrisy, the struggle for survival, the need to belong, to feel part of a group or part of the landscape in order to experience self-worth or to make life worth the effort. The boys find

comfort "liming" in Moses room, sharing a common background, facing common woes. They develop a sense of pride in having walked the places of history and so many are unwilling to leave London, though they have such difficulty with basic survival, though as Moses put it, "they catching they royal to make a living, staying in a cramp-up room where you have to do everything--sleep, eat, dress, wash, look, live!" (164)

Much has been written on the calypso style of the narrative. Like Vic Reid's New Day, the language is an approximation of West Indian dialects which can easily be understood once the reader gets used to some basic syntactical patterns. This modified form works exceptionally well for the dramatic dialogues and it has a haunting syncopated rhythm, like the blues in the descriptive and philosophical passages.

The analysis of each of the foregoing selected novels has indicated its strengths in developing themes and characters of the West Indian society. Though deeply rooted in the local milieu, the novels treat emotions and aspirations, strengths and weaknesses which beneath the superficial differences are common to human beings anywhere. The structural and stylistic qualities have also been noted, thus making it easier for teachers to decide which novels to explore further with their students to fulfil the sociological and aesthetic, the affective and cognitive aims of the study of full-length prose fiction in the Language Arts Curriculum.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides an overview of Caribbean novels written in English, and a selection of eight works which appear to be eminently suited for use in Canadian high schools. During the selection process attention was paid to those sections of the present Alberta Senior High School Language Arts Statement of Content (Program of Studies) dealing with the objectives of the study of literature, to the working notes used by Senior High Language Arts Ad Hoc novel selection committee, to factors with which the average Canadian adolescent can identify, to the relevance of themes, characters, setting and language to the West Indian environment, to the potential within the novels for meaningful discussion of the human condition, and even to such periferal concerns as optimum length of the fiction for practical use in high schools. Efforts have been made to emphasize the benefits which careful reading and analysis of these works can provide for teachers and students in our pluralistic society, and, in fact, for anyone who wishes to understand their neighbours in our global community or to grasp fully the development of the novel in the twentieth century.

The four preceding chapters of this study first demonstrate the need for the use of such materials in the high school English curriculum; second, give the aesthetic and educational perspectives guiding the selection of such novels and provide the background

information about the West Indian society and the development of the West Indian novel deemed necessary for their meaningful use in the classroom; third, show through an overview of one hundred and ten West Indian novels their trends and pervading themes; and finally, provide an analysis of eight of those novels which seem to have excellent potential for use in Canadian classrooms.

In the introduction, the rationale for the study (in our culturally and racially mixed society and in our ever-shrinking global village) of English literature other than the traditional British and North American variety was developed. References to several educators and researchers in the fields of psychology, sociology, and curriculum planning were made in support of the plea to broaden the literature program. The patent alienation of non-whites in schools where their image is faceless or distorted negatively, and the call of the philosophy statement of the mandated 1981 Alberta Education Program of Studies for Language Arts for literature "to explore the environment and ideas of others" and "expand experience vicariously" are additional reasons to search in the new literatures for resources to fittingly extend the present literature offerings in schools.

McBlane (1979) has made the case for the inclusion in the Canadian high school curriculum of several African novels written in English. She states that although some African titles have appeared on the novels list of the Alberta High School Curriculum Guide, these novels are rarely used, perhaps because teachers are lacking the particular perspectives that would make the study meaningful. There are no West Indian novels on any recommended list in Alberta though there is a mention of the inclusion of two West Indian works in the

1983 curriculum recommendations in Ontario. The chance to use West Indian fiction in Alberta schools is therefore even more remote.

The second chapter develops the three perspectives necessary for the appreciation and responsible selection of such novels for use in Canadian high schools. It gives background information about the West Indian society and surveys the beginnings of the novel as an art form in the West Indies in order to bring the teacher into the Caribbean milieu, a necessary step in assessing and successfully teaching the novels. In Chapter II there is also an explanation of the critical principles which are used in analysing the selected novels and some of the argument behind those principles, for in some cases the West Indian novel is itself extending the frontiers of the novel form, thereby outdating purely traditional critical instruments. Much more significant for criticism must be the function of the novel as the new writers themselves envision it if the analysis of their works is to be relevant. To the African writer Achebe (1975), "Art for Art sake is just another piece of deoderized dogshit" and Lindfors Bernth (1979) argued against judging West Indian literature in relation solely to "English literary tradition." (11) What is needed in his view is criticism that examines

> how our [West Indian] writers succeed in using our creole language and facts and notions of our African heritage and oral tradition to construct an alternative to our inherited tradition enabling all our people, lettered and unlettered, to sing of the West Indian way of life. (11)

A sincere effort has been made to avoid what Ramchand terms the two extremes of criticism, that is the danger on the one hand of the novels becoming primary evidence for theories about societies or on

the other hand to be seen only as sources of "an aesthesticism that denies social function altogether." (14) Hopefully, an awareness of these factors has guided the discussions in the overview and in the critiques of the selected novels, though the traditional considerations of setting, plot, theme, character, point of view and style have formed part of the critical framework.

The third perspective outlined in Chapter II, and guiding analysis and selection of the novels, is an educational one. This perspective considers the interests of the adolescent readers and their reading levels. It considers the novel's revelation of what Burton (1970) called the "common-ness of the human drama" (10) while presenting authentically a vastly different culture. It considers as well the avoidance of prejudice, objectionable language and scenes, and even takes into account the book length and its availability in inexpensive form (see Appendix A).

The third chapter presents an overview of one hundred and ten novels written by thirty-nine novelists. The survey is organized thematically, showing the recurring motifs in Caribbean fiction. Here critical interpretations by Ramchand (1970), King (1979, 1980), Hughes (1979) helped in identifying the pervading themes and subjects. Most of the novels could be meaningfully discussed under subsections dealing with the historical past and political consciousness, portraying the West Indian poor, and exploring the various versions of the psychological legacy of colonialism. Among this last and largest group of novels there are some which focus on the peculiar schizophrenia of the West Indian torn between his slave/master ancestry and his British style education; some that emphasize the

consequent isolation of characters overwhelmed by such conflicts; some which pursue the alienation and frustration of West Indians who migrate to Britain or North America; and novels which attempt to come to terms with the past or explore the West Indian identity in fantasy and myth. The novels vary greatly in style and viewpoint, but there are several which can claim recognition on an international scale. Reasons for elimination have more often been difficulty of style and structure for the target readers, the appearance of scenes that seem too violent or too sexually explicit, or the presence of language crudities rather than because of any deep rooted flaws in the novels. There have even been instances where a good novel has been eliminated because it does not throw light on one of the recurring concerns of the area, especially if its main features are well presented in another novel which also deals specifically with one of the main themes.

Finally from the survey, eight novels: New Day, In the Castle of My Skin, Wide Sargasso Sea, Voices Under the Window, A Brighter Sun, Crick Crack Monkey, Brother Man, and The Lonely Londoners, were selected and analysed to provide a fuller understanding of those special qualities which mark them as worthy of classroom study, and which should motivate high school students to read on for pleasure and insight.

The research which produced this study has led to the following conclusions:

1. A number of West Indian novels in English do exist that are relevant to Canadian high school students.
2. West Indian novels selected for high school can provide:

a. an appreciation of the concerns of other multi-racial societies which, like Canada, have inherited a post-colonial identity crisis.
b. insights into common human problems through exploration of the concerns of individuals in a particular localised setting that may be quite different from ours.
c. literary and stylistic characteristics that could expand the concept of language possibilities without presenting too much difficulty.
d. fine examples of narration and dialogue blend that suit the characters involved and reveal the social varieties in the complex Caribbean world.

3. Many West Indian novels fit the guidelines set up for the choice of literature outlined in the latest Alberta Education Program of Studies for Language Arts.

4. Knowledge of the historical background and the milieu of the Caribbean would help students and teachers appreciate the recurring themes of West Indian novels.

5. The overview reveals an amazing creative vitality and shows that West Indian novelists are concerned with some basic problems of their society.

Based on the study and these conclusions, especially at a time when Departments of Education are revamping curricula to include a wide range of literary materials (though the mandated minimums for Canadian content militates against this), these recommendations seem desirable:

1. That piloting of the West Indian novels selected in this study be undertaken by the Department of Education.

2. That West Indian novels be considered when theme units are being drawn up by teachers, school systems and curriculum committees. In this way there will be encouragement of the use of West Indian novels in the regular classrooms.

3. That novels from the ones selected and analysed in this study be added to the high school novels lists in Alberta.

4. a. That the historical and cultural background of the West Indies be studied to help teachers to understand the students in their classes who may have come from that background.

b. That the historical and cultural background of the West Indies be studied by teachers who choose to work in class with a novel from the area.

5. That some inservice workshops be set up to introduce teachers to this vibrant new literature.

6. That, in view of the new developments taking place in the novel as an art form in the Caribbean, grants be made available to English professors, curriculum developers and teachers of English to study the Caribbean novel more intensely.

7. That the Alberta English Language Arts Council and the Canadian Council of Teachers of English lend more active support to the inclusion of a wider range of literature materials in High School English programs.

8. That Canadian book sellers and publishers be urged to carry more international literature.

9. That similar research be undertaken to identify short stories, plays, and poems written in the Caribbean to provide a wider base from which the teacher can select materials.

10. That research be undertaken to identify other international literatures that would be feasible expansions of the school curriculum.

Since it has been claimed by some literary authorities cited in this study that the most exciting developments in the novel as an art form are taking place outside of Britain and North America, educators would be doing a disservice to their students if they failed to include works from these literatures for study in the classsrooms. No doubt there will be the need for teachers to learn about the society which produces the work they are presenting, but this is a burden they will have to assume. Bruce King (1974) noted these developments and their consequences

> The best books of the year are as likely to be written by Ghanaians, West Indians, or Australians as by Americans or Englishmen, and their subject matter, themes and style will often include characteristics that are puzzling to foreigners. Since such characteristics may add to, or

> detract from, the qualities of a book, they are likely to become an increasingly important concern to readers, students and critics. A reader is now likely to be confronted with English social awareness, American individualism, Nigerian tribalism, Indian mysticism, and the West Indian search for identity. (1)

King also outlines the exciting language modifications which West Indian novels are making in English where there is creolization and the sophisticated playing off of various registers of English against each other. The challenge to plunge into this literature demands much effort, but only such as will pay off in rich dividends of added insights for teachers and their students.

The time was when Canadians had few images of themselves in the literature they studied in the classrooms. That deprivation has now been eradicated. The danger now is that, in rectifying the lack of Canadian content in the past, authorities may develop a provincialism that runs counter to the mosaic the country claims to be, and to the global reality forced upon us by modern technology. The need to understand those who share this country with us, and those who share our shrinking planet, must be addressed at least in high school, which for so many terminates literary pursuits.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR FULL LENGTH LITERATURE MATERIALS*

THE MATERIAL SHOULD:

1. Be readable, entertaining and interesting dependent on the age, ability and social maturity of the students.
2. Illustrate literary merit in a wide range of style and structure.
3. Include a variety of moods and tones - humorous, serious, intellectual, fanciful, exciting.
4. Offer a variety of social, historical, geographical and cultural backgrounds.
5. Develop the student's understanding of today's world.
6. Provoke discussion and writing by the students.
7. Avoid prejudice on the basis of race, religion, sex or ethnic origin.
8. Avoid objectionable language insofar as this can be done without sacrificing the integrity of the material.
9. Be of manageable length (100 - 350 pages) and readily available in durable and attractive paperback.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA

A. NOVELS

The list of novels should:

1. Include variety in themes and tone.
2. Stimulate literary and aesthetic appreciation of a wide spectrum of fiction.
3. Include both interpretive and escapist literature.

B. NON-FICTION

The list of non-fiction should:

1. Include a variety of writing styles.
2. Include topics of travel and adventure, history, philosophy, biography, autobiography, reminiscence.
3. Include a variety of attitudes and opinions.
4. Avoid propaganda and innuendo.
5. Establish logical organization with appropriate emphasis on central ideas.

C. PLAYS

The list of plays should:

1. Include both classical and modern drama.
2. Insofar as possible be available in print and some other medium.

* Department of Alberta. Language Arts Ad Hoc Novels Selection Committee, Working Guidelines.